

THE

MALE-COQUETTE.

WILLIAMSON

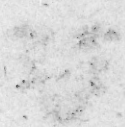
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THE
MALE-COQUETTE;

OR, THE
HISTORY

OF THE
Hon. EDWARD ASTELL.

In TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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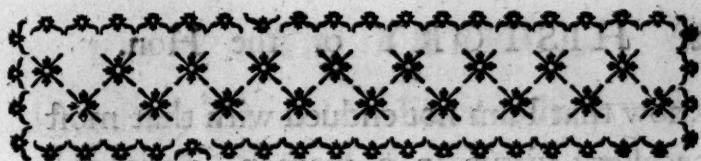
HISTORY

HON. EDWARD ASTELL

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.





THE
HISTORY
OF THE

Hon. EDWARD ASTELL.



LETTER I.

Miss Musgrove in the Country, to Miss
Wynne in Town.

HAT sheets of complaints have
you sent me, my dear Harriot!
complaints of a silence for which
I am not answerable, as almost every
hour of my time has been engrossed. "By
whom? By what?" do you exclaim.—
Tell me quick, quick, Lucy, for you well
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know that I am not endued with that most necessary virtue in a woman, patience."

So far, my lively Harriot: and I reply with a seriousness suitable to the importance of the occasion, "By a man," such a one too who would have prevented your dear giddy head from once thinking of a return to London.

Are you not now eager for a description of this engrossing man? But you must give me leave to take a little breath: I cannot by any means keep up the spirit of a long letter in my Harriot's rapid, lively stile: I must go back to my own manner of writing, which is exactly, like my mode of thinking, sober; "and consequently dull, you will add: but without doubt extremely methodical."

How often, my high spirited friend, have you strove to laugh me out of my

re-

regularity; yet to how little, to how very little purpose? Don't be angry, Harriot: but methinks I see you just now with the eager look and earnest action of the lover in a French comedy I have read, whose servant bringing him a message from a lady whom he admires, after a tedious rhodomontade of insignificant chat, quite foreign to the purpose, stops just as he is beginning to repeat her words, and cries, "Hold, Sir, there's a spider in your hair." How lucky is it for me that we are far asunder at this time!—but to the point.

About a fortnight ago as I was walking with my mother in the wood, my father came hastily up to us, and said that a gentleman had met with an unlucky accident, having been thrown out of his phaeton a few paces from our house; "he is much bruised, added my father, and his servants have, by my order, brought him

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in: I wish, my dear (addressing himself to my mother) you would step in, and see what can be done for him; he is one of the finest young fellows in his person I ever saw, and his behaviour appears no less pleasing."

My mother, who is benevolence itself, hastened in, while I continued my walk, supposing that as my presence was not desired, it was unnecessary.

In about half an hour my mother returned to me. "This young gentleman, Lucy," said she, "of whom your father spoke so highly, well deserves, according to all appearance, the encomiums bestowed on him. I never beheld a face so perfectly handsome; yet there is nothing of that formal regularity which sometimes is disgusting even in beauty itself. There is an infinite deal of sense and spirit in his countenance:

tenance : his manners are extremely insinuating, and he bears his accident with so much mildness and composure, that one feels a thousand times more for him, because he seems to feel so little for himself."

---Take notice, Harriot, these are my mother's words.

Now don't you die with impatience to know of what his eyes are ? Of what colour his hair is ? And don't you long to hear about numberless other trifling circumstances ? But I never attend to such matters, you know : matters of no sort of importance—The character, the mind, ought certainly to be first regarded. Neither man nor woman can be worthy of our attention, however externally lovely, if not internally amiable.

Mr. Astell seems not deficient in understanding ; but he has been here only a fort-

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night: I must see more of him, in order to know whether he deserves the panegyric which my father and mother have lavished on him.—He is a young man of fashion indeed, and the meer being so would recommend him sufficiently to half my sex: but rank, exclusive of merit, is no recommendation to me.—Birth and fortune ought to excite a man to distinguish himself by copying the virtues of his exemplary ancestors: in our degenerate age, those who are nobly born, and inherit large fortunes, are too often instigated to be either ridiculous or vicious, and very frequently both.

You hate moralizing, I will, therefore, hasten to a conclusion; not being able, at present, to give you more pleasure with my pen, than by assuring you that

I am ever yours.

L. E. T.



LETTER II.

The Hon. Edward Astell to Lord Selwyn.

WHAT a *confounded* accident did I meet with, should I say, Harry, just when I was in full chace after Olivia, if other things had not fallen in my way, which will help to accommodate matters, and make amends for my disappointment there.

The day after we parted I was by my own cursed aukwardness some how overturned, and fairly laid at the gate of the most hospitable people now existing upon earth, who accordingly took me in, and treated me more like their own son than a stranger. But thank Heaven, Selwyn, I stand not so related to them, as they have

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so very fine a girl for their daughter, that I should be horribly out of humour to be obliged to call her sister. Irregular as you have always thought me in my proceedings with women, I have, you know, Harry, kept pretty clear of atrocious crimes; such at least so nominated in the vocabulary held venerable by such tame fellows as yourself. No, faith! I don't think I am half so much libertine as a coxcomb; and yet a coxcomb is so contemptible a character, that it hurts me to feel myself one: I certainly prove myself a coxcomb by discovering so strong a propensity to egotism.—Do, bear with me, however, a little longer, Selwyn; I shall, I trust, one day, become a more rational animal: for tho' youth and beauty may render coxcombry just tolerable, what under Heaven can be more intolerable than an old male flirt? No, Harry, when I have fluttered about some years longer, I shall look upon myself as quite

quite fit for retirement; yet, after all, life is not life without *indulgencies*, and therefore I shall endeavour to secure as many as I can while I have spirits to enjoy them.—

But to return to Lucy Musgrove. She is positively a fine creature, and yet her beauty is the least of her perfections. I would draw her portrait upon paper, if it were possible for me to do her justice; take, however, a sketch of her—I have a great mind to throw away my pen, and give it up—She is actually above all description—The easy elegance of her form, the rich lustre of her complexion, the delicious languor which swims in her dark blue eyes, the ten thousand little Cupids which hide themselves in her dimples, and the voluptuous *enbonpoint* of her whole person, all unite to render her a very captivating object: she is, indeed, with those charms,

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the loveliest girl I ever saw ; but the mild dignity in her air, the tender sensibility in her features, and the naïveté in her manners, those are the charms which make her, in my eyes, irresistible.—Now, do but to what I have said, add a cultivated understanding, an elegant taste, with a heart inhabited by every virtue, and the catalogue of Miss Musgrove's attractions is complete.

I almost wish I had never seen her. I love her, Harry : I can't help loving her : but she is too good for me : she will never, I doubt, be mine upon my own terms, and——s'death ! I have forgotten Olivia all this while.—But this Lucy would drive even the devil himself out of my head : I have him there indeed but too often.

If I would succeed in this house, I must not, I find, appear the man of pleasure :
the

EDWARD ASTELL. 11

the old folks by no means approve of such a character, and the young lady seems rather to be influenced by their prejudices.— I have not yet ventured to discover much of myself; but the modest distance she keeps me at, gives me no encouragement to hope that I shall bend her to my purpose.— To say truth, Mr. and Mrs. Musgrove look more pleased with me than their daughter does; but tho' the former is a man of learning, and tho' both of them have lived in the world, they have the utmost aversion to the capital, to all its follies and vices: nay, even to its amusements. Soon after the birth of his Lucy, who is, I imagine, about eighteen or nineteen, Mr. Musgrove retired to his paternal estate, which, though not large, is very sufficient for the pleasures, as well as the *comforts* (a favourite word with these good creatures) of life. They are, indeed, Harry, people without guile; and Lucy, tho' she has been

politely educated, has a noble simplicity in her manners, which is captivating beyond expression.—I never behold her without recollecting those lines by lord Lyttleton :

“Polite as tho’ in courts she’d ever been,

“Yet good as she the world had never seen.”

Her goodness I revere; but it is that goodness, undoubtedly, which prevents her from bestowing a single favourable thought of me; for though “tremblingly alive” to every creature in distress, and full of the warmest sentiments of benevolence and compassion, she appears cold and insensible to me: she does not, however, honour me so far as to treat me with total neglect: from such treatment I should have hopes of her immediately, as she then must have some secret reason for such a carriage. Women can never be particular in any shape to men without

some design, at least without being strongly suspected : but this amiable girl behaves to me with the same cheerful ease as she would to one of her own sex, and neither seems to love nor hate me.

Shall I tell you, Harry, that I cannot bear this cutting, this cruel indifference, after having had so much reason to plume myself upon my conquests?---But let me keep down the rising coxcomb---yet you know, Harry, that I have made an extensive devastation, a strange havock among the pretty creatures.---Never did I attack *one* who was not charmed by my eyes, by my tongue, or my dress, or my address, or something about me---But this lovely *insensible* is proof against every charm. Possibly she has a lover already: many lovers, doubtless; but I mean a favoured one, whom I must, in the first place, endeavour to find out, and then I must attack

attack her in a form different from my own, in order to recommend myself to such celestial purity: an angel only can captivate an angel---If I am so happy as to hinder the cloven foot from peeping out!---Well! write to me immediately at Christopher Musgrove's, Esq; at Woodcot, near ----- in Hampshire.



LETTER III.

Miss Wynne to Miss Musgrove.

YOU are the most provoking creature breathing, to begin about so charming a fellow, and to break off just when I was wild to read a little more about him. Positively, Lucy, if you are not more explicit, and immediately too, I will write to Mrs. Musgrove, and beg the favour of her to give me the wished-for information.

I was

I was certainly quite unfortunate to leave Woodcot at the very time it was going to receive so brilliant an inhabitant: but I forget—I should have stood no chance against the superior force of my dear Lucy's attractions—no, no: let me get the man to London, and then I may, perhaps, make something of him. Beauties are so common here that the men know not where to fix; but in a lonely country-house, inhabited by a divinity too, he must leave his heart with you, if he has a heart to lose: and indeed, I am, sometimes tempted to think, that nature, being in a prodigious hurry to make his outside complete, quite forgot to enclose that pretty little necessary *thing*. It is certain that we frequently see strong heads without brains; and the excessive volubility of the fashionable beaux of the age, together with their nonsense, plainly proves, that notwithstanding their load of hair, tho' ever so well

accommodée, their inner apartments are poorly furnished. Can you conceive a more deplorable animal than a modern fellow of fashion, who employs his whole time in trying to make his head formidable—not among his own sex--don't mistake me.

Forgive me, my dear creature, for running on thus: and only consider how animating the subject is---a pretty fellow---what can be more animating than a pretty fellow!

“Stop there, child,” cries some grave corrector, vain of his erudition: “you are quite in an error: you are ignorant of the meaning of words, and you take things in a wrong sense.” Stuff---stuff! is not a handsome young man of fashion, like your guest, my Lucy, worth a thousand of those regular wretches who move by clock-work, and do every thing by rule?---I hate rules---

I never was exact in my life, and could hardly, you know, bring myself to conform to the domestic œconomy of a family whom I so dearly love. How, then, is it possible for me to bear any kind of formality, which is only another word for dulness---But to your man. You have not been half particular enough about him---I entirely agree with you---but I must have his eyes, teeth, hair, all described. If you want adequate expressions, if he “beggars all description,” take out your pencil, and trace him on paper: but be careful not to forget to let me know what progress he has made in the dear innocent heart of my amiable friend.

The most affectionate respects wait on good Mr. and Mrs. Musgrove, from their and your

Very sincere

H. Wynne.

P. S.

P. S. Write instantly. Mr. Westcombe still follows me like my shadow. I begin absolutely to abhor men.



LETTER IV.

The Hon. Edward Astell to Lord Selwyn.

WHAT a short, trifling answer, did you make to an affair of such importance: an affair on which depends entirely the future felicity of my life.

This Lucy, this angel, I should say, gains hourly upon me: her father and mother, good people, appear absolutely delighted with me; but there is a reserve in their charming daughter which hurts me. I, who have been so idolized by the women, cannot bear to see the loveliest of her sex
totally

totally indifferent to me: yet, tho' she does not appear to admire me, she treats me with an obliging ease, which is perfectly enchanting; but that ease, that ease, Selwyn, destroys me.---Did she love me? Heavens! how my heart bounds at the bare idea! Did she love me, I say, she would not have any of that calmness, any of that composure in her behaviour---no---no---I am too well acquainted with the sex to be mistaken: but tho' I have yet had no success, I may not be always unsuccessful; and you may be assured that I shall omit nothing to gain a heart so uncommonly desirable, a heart above all price.

She has just now left me, after having brought an elegant *bouquet* to decorate my apartment: how beautifully has she disposed the various tints, and in how delicate a taste!

I seized the lovely hand which had been so prettily exercised to give me pleasure, and pressed it ardently to my lips: she blushed; but tho' she withdrew it, she seemed to withdraw it with some reluctance. Coxcomb again, say you--Say what you will, Harry, she has promised to return to me in half an hour: we are then to read Rousseau's *Emilius* together. She comes, she comes--the dear, delightful creature--Adieu, Harry.

LETTER V.

Miss Musgrove to Miss Wynne.

WHAT a mad girl you are, Harriot? but I know you are a good one, and, therefore, excuse your flights. Can you, however, be serious a moment? I have

have much to say; yet nothing, I fear, to please me.

This young stranger, whose accident introduced him into our family, makes himself but too agreeable: he is not only very handsome and very elegant in his form and manners, but he is also finely accomplished. Never did I hear a man read better, nor discover more taste in books; he also excels in musick; he draws; he dances. In short, he does every thing with a grace which enchants, which captivates you, before you are aware of his seducing powers.

“ If he is capable of dancing, he must have recovered from his bruises, and consequently able to pursue his first *route*.”

True, my Harriot, he is perfectly well; but my father and mother are so pleased with

with him, and he is, or pretends to be, so pleased with them and their daughter, that ——— I don't know when he will leave us — I don't know what I would say — but methinks, my dear friend, he becomes too interesting an object, and attaches himself so entirely to me, that he has left me nothing to talk of except himself. I have a great mind to stop here, and say no more about him: and yet, Harriot, he is very amiable, and has a delicacy in his manners which is rather uncommon. — I begin to wish that he had never come here; but I fear, notwithstanding, that I shall be sorry when he goes.

Why did you leave me, my Harriot, just at this critical time? why didn't you stay, and be convinced that I am not guilty of exaggeration when I tell you how extremely agreeable he is, how sensibly he talks, how enchantingly he looks, and how

how meltingly he touches the harpsichord? You would then have seen him, have heard him; you would then have received those assiduities, those attentions, which he now, for want of a more inviting object, lavishes on me, and which only tend to soften a heart already but too much prepossessed in his favour. Adorned, however, as he is, with numberless attractions, he seems not conscious of them: he is, apparently attached wholly to me: he even appears to forget that he himself is the only amiable object. Yet think not, my dear friend, that your Lucy is caught by outward form alone—no—the most angelic figure, without intellectual charms, could not allure me.—But *He* possesses all these charms in their highest lustre: he is benevolent, generous, compassionate, and—

“Every thing.”

Indeed,

Indeed, Harriot, his behaviour to farmer Smallcrop and his family has convinced me that his heart is as good as his person and his manners are engaging. That poor man had been, by a long and expensive fit of sickness, rendered incapable of paying his rent at the usual time to his haughty landlord, of which incapacity my father was absolutely ignorant, or he would have most readily assisted him. One evening, as Mr. Astell was walking in the meadows, he accidentally met with Peggy Smallcrop in tears. He immediately observed her, for you know she is exceedingly pretty, and stopping her, enquired into the cause of her affliction. The good girl told the truth, but told it in a manner which touched the heart of this amiable young man, and obliged him instantly to go home with her and pay what her father owed; adding a handsome present besides, to set them forward in the world.

Possibly

Possibly, you may be ready to imagine that Peggy's beauty excited such uncommon generosity; but as he scarce seemed to regard her then, and has taken no notice of her since, we must, I think, acquit him of having any improper views in what he has done for her family, and ascribe his beneficence to the constitutional generosity of his temper, to the innate goodness of his heart: I blush, my dear, while I write thus in praise of a man of whom I seem to know so little; and yet, Harriot, why should I be ashamed of giving merit all the commendation to which it is entitled? I ought, on the contrary, to be eager to acknowledge, to applaud it, wherever I meet with it.—However, I have, since my first acquaintance, intimacy I may call it, with Mr. Astell, felt so many different, so many new sensations in my bosom, that I know not how either to define or describe them. He is scarce ever a

moment from me; but, though I will honestly confess, that I am never so happy as when he is near me, his approach always flutters me strangely; and the very particular attention he pays to me, sometimes embarrasses me exceedingly.—I am interrupted.—

My mother has just now told me that two new guests are arrived, Mr. Selby and his son, and desired me to assist her in doing the honours of the house. Astell also stepped into the parlour, and, with unusual eagerness, asked who these new visitors were, and whether I particularly interested myself in their arrival. I replied in the negative; but he pressed my hand to his lips with earnestness, and repeated the question, adding, “Indeed, my ever amiable Miss Musgrove, are you not pleased to hear of this Mr. Selby? Is he not a lover, or an admirer? He must be: nobody

body can look on that lovely face without being inexpressibly charmed with it."

I blushed, my Harriot; yet, shall I own the real truth? My face glowed from pleasure, as well as from modesty: and that glow seemed to please him, for he threw his arm round me, clasped me, in spite of all my resistance, to his bosom, with a tenderness which was but too affecting, called me his dearest angel, his Lucy, his innocent Lucy, and then asked me, with much emotion, if he might take so delightful a liberty?

I made no reply, but disengaged myself from him. His behaviour was indeed delicately tender, but I was afraid to trust myself with him. Was I not right, my dear Harriot?—Would you were here to tell me your thoughts of this—agreeable man! Could you not come down, if only

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for a week or a fortnight? Do, my amiable friend, prevail on your good aunt to spare you only for a few days: most probably he will not be longer here,—my silly heart! how heavy it feels at that apprehension! But I cannot enumerate all my follies—I cannot expose myself upon paper: but were you with me, my dear Miss Wynne, every thought of my heart should be laid open to your view. Adieu, my best friend—Think on my request, and grant it, if you ever loved

Your

Lucy Musgrove.

L E T-

LETTER VI.

The Hon. Edward Astell to Lord Selwyn.

I HAD just begun to make some progress in my affairs, when a rival—curse him—has stepped in, and if I don't keep a good look out, will bear away my prize—Not that the dear creature seems to give him the preference neither.—In short, I don't know what to make of her.—Yet I believe, if *he* had not thrust himself in the way I might have made something of her by this time—tho', actually, she is almost too lovely, too good to be deceived.—I never—never met with—take her for all in all, so perfect a creature. Were I ever to marry—and matrimony would, I suppose, be the end of me—I cannot expect to find such another model for a wife: so beau-

tiful is she, so innocently inviting, so superlatively modest. But I shall not, it is not, indeed, in my power to deceive her. I love her, love her ardently, and I began to have hopes of touching the most valuable, the most affectionate heart in the world, (if one may judge of its feelings for a lover by those which she discovers for her father and mother, and for a female friend in London, with whom she corresponds, and of whom she has spoken to me in the highest terms). But here are a Mr. Selby and his son; the former an old friend of my lovely girl's father, a very good kind of man; the latter a well-made, well-bred, sensible young fellow, and yet diffident, too diffident, with all the requisite accomplishments to charm.—How immensely stupid! and yet, possibly, to that very stupidity I owe all my happiness: yet why do I talk of happiness!—I can taste none without this angel, who is become
 actually

actually necessary to my peace.—But this Selby—he is really quite the thing—he is just what a man ought to be, and I revere the character which I shall never be able to copy.—Can I then blame this attractive girl for loving an amiable character, similar to her own, in another sex? But she *does* not love him, she *cannot, must not, shall not* love him.—The thought is distracting, and will drive me to madness.—Dear, lovely creature! I wrong her, by harbouring such an injurious suspicion. She is, on the contrary, rather reserved and shy to *him*, while she gives *me* all her time: yes, Selwyn, gives to *me* her winning smiles and animating conversation.—

I think I see a visible preference.—What transport is there in the mere idea!—I cannot be mistaken—we are both, you may imagine, assiduous about her.

T'other day, when she was desired by the elder Mr. Selby to sing, his son and I rose at the same time with eager haste to accompany her. With a rosy smile, which added new charms to her fair face, she put the notes into my hand: I pressed *hers* in return, and complied with an alacrity which gave such a spirit to my performance, that it extorted praises even from my rival, while Lucy blushed her approbation, and, with her eyes modestly thrown down, begged me to remain at the harpsichord, pointing out to me another favourite air. How sweetly, how melodiously flowed her tuneful accents! My heart and my fingers were agitated alike by the delightful harmony of her voice. I was not, however, quite so intoxicated as not to offer to resign my seat to Selby; but he politely declined the acceptance of it, tho' I saw, by a dejection which he could not hide, that he was not a little chagrined at the flattering preference which

which Lucy gave to me: glorious preference! what an inestimable acquisition—if I am really blest with her sincere regard—

Yet, I am afraid, Selwyn, I am afraid that I am not deserving of such happiness. There is, I am thoroughly sensible, so much of the coxcomb woven into my constitution, that it will be very difficult, if not utterly impossible, totally to eradicate it.—Perhaps the eradication of it is to be accomplished by Lucy—at least, I am well assured that no other woman will ever have the extirpating power over me.—Well! be it so—

I am content: I even wish that the great reformation was compleated. I am frequently tired of playing the fool: pray Heaven! I be not more tired of acting the wise man, if ever I am destined to personate that character. Upon my soul, Harry, I would give up my liberty to-morrow, were I not afraid of making a cursed husband; and actually, this is such an angel that it

would grieve even me, thoughtless as I am, to make her wretched: yet, Selwyn, I really believe we are formed for each other.

When we all separated after the musick, she followed her mother into a rustic temple in the garden. I pursued my lovely creature, and throwing my arm round her, "How enchantingly have you sung this afternoon," said I: "how exquisitely do you charm all hearts."

"Don't lavish praises on me alone," replied she, in the softest voice, "to which, indeed, you are entitled, as your fine taste in the accompaniment made me doubly desire to excel, if possible."

What an amiable modesty! I caught her to my beating bosom, and, while I whispered

whispered an infinite deal of tenderness in her ear, stole the most ravishing kisses,

The dear, blushing girl, broke hastily from my arms, and seemed angry; but I plainly perceived that her anger was counterfeited: by a more corrected behaviour I soon made my peace. She is, certainly, of a most heavenly disposition; but I actually believe that she is not absolutely indifferent about me—Vanity again—say you. But prythee, Selwyn, let me have your serious opinion, and immediately too, upon a subject on which my whole felicity depends.

LETTER VII.

Miss Musgrove to Miss Wynne.

WHY are you not here, my valuable friend? or at least, why don't you write to me, and let me know your reasons for refusing me?

I have been greatly embarrassed. Mr. Selby came to us on purpose, it seems, to make proposals to my father: but you shall hear. I have already told you that Mr. Astell appeared to be alarmed at his arrival, and, if possible, redoubled his assiduities: the other happened to be in the same humour, so that between them both, I had scarce a moment to myself.

A few days ago the elder Mr. Selby, asking me to sing, I—shall I tell you, my
Har-

Harriot? I chose to be *accompanied* by Astell, and he complied in such a style and manner—Oh! my friend! I thought I never had heard harmony till that moment. I was so enchanted, that I could not bestow the praises on his performance which it so justly deserved. But he is too eager, Harriot; too ready to seize every opportunity to behave in a manner which I do not approve of. And yet so great is my weakness—I will not, however, I cannot, thus minutely relate every secret movement of my heart with regard to Mr. Astell.

When the musick was over he followed my mother and me into your favourite bower, as you call it, and took a liberty, my dear, which could be only pardonable in himself.—Yet I was silly, and forgave it. I am quite out of humour with myself for that forgiveness, and for what followed.

Mr.

Mr. Selby was no less assiduous to speak to me: he found a moment when I was alone in the garden reflecting on what had passed, and advanced to meet me with a modesty and timidity which very much prejudiced me in his favour. But I have no heart to dispose of: it is gone; fled for ever from my bosom—yet Selby is amiable, and has a great deal of merit. Will you not wonder then that I wished to avoid him, to shun a man truly worthy of my esteem? But I was sorry, nay, I believe, I was ashamed to listen to what I guessed he was going to say, tho' he delivered himself with a diffidence which undoubtedly prevented him from appearing to advantage.

“Is not diffidence a proof of merit?”

Certainly, and therefore I was affected by it.

“Miss

“Miss Musgrove,” said he, after having several times opened his mouth to speak, and as often closed it again, “I have long wished for, I have long sought an opportunity to intreat your favour, to solicit your friendship—More I dare not yet pretend to—and I fear”—added he, with a sigh, as he gently pressed my hand, “more will never be allowed me.—Had not accident thrown Mr. Astell in your way, possibly *my* attentions to please, to win a heart so estimable as yours, might at length, from the natural sweetness of your temper, have excited your pity, at least, and made you wish it were in your power to return my love; and that very wish, had not a more happy rival interposed, might, in time, have ripened into something like affection: but as things are now, for me, unfortunately situated, I dare not form flattering expectations—Yet could I not leave you without disclosing a secret, the
con-

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concealment of which has long been extremely painful to my fond breast. From my first acquaintance with you, I loved you, ardently loved you: but as we were both too young to receive the approbation of our relations, with regard to our union, I forebore to mention what my heart was full of; because I prized your peace too much to desire to lay you under any restrictions at so early an age—And believe me, Miss Musgrove, I do not repent of having acted with the greatest honour—yet pardon me for saying, that I should have been happier if you had not met the man in whose favour you are prepossessed, till you had first listened to *my* sentiments, which are as sincere as they are tender; and to which, possibly, with a heart at that time disengaged, you might have given some attention; perhaps you might have pitied them.—I should have been more unhappy, however, if this seducing stranger had appeared.

peared afterwards, and occasioned your regret for the indulgence you might have treated me with."

Here he stopped, expecting my reply.

Will you believe me, my dear Harriot, I was as much embarrassed about the delivery of it as if I had really loved him; and attribute my embarrassment entirely to the reluctance I felt at the thoughts of giving pain to a worthy mind, or to wound a heart so modestly deserving. Yet, upon reflection, it was certainly more generous to let him know at once that I could not look on him in the light wished for by him. I therefore, replied, after much hesitation, and as out of countenance as if I had committed a great fault, that I was highly obliged to him for his good opinion of me, and for the esteem which he
pro-

professed for me, but that it was not in my power to make the return he desired; concluding with an intreaty to bear no more upon that subject.

He looked abashed and dejected at my answer, and only said, "I know to whom I must stand indebted for a refusal, which tho' delivered in the gentlest terms, makes me truly wretched."

He then fetched a deep sigh, and turned from me.

I left him to inform my mother of what had passed, but had hardly finished my tale when my father came into the cedar parlour, in which we were sitting.

He saw me covered with confusion, from having mentioned Mr. Astell in the manner I was obliged to do, and said, "How

now, Lucy, what! are you complaining to your mother of young Selby's importunities?" His father overheard what had passed between you and *him* in the garden, and, troubled to see his son so disappointed, came to seek me, and asked me if you was really engaged to Mr. Astell.—I told him that I fancied you were too good a daughter to receive proposals of that kind without acquainting me, and assured him that I had heard nothing about such an engagement. "It is certain, however, replied Mr. Selby, that Mr. Astell behaves in a very particular manner to Miss Musgrove; but, if he has no serious intentions, will you not permit my boy to endeavour to gain her affections. He is very unhappy to see the influence his rival has, to all outward appearance, in your family: he confesses, indeed, that his person and accomplishments justly attract your notice, and deserve your esteem; but still, my

good

good old friend, if he really means nothing but a little fashionable gallantry, may not my Harry enter the lists with him, and try, at least, to gain so valuable a prize as your daughter certainly is."

"What could I say to this?" continued my father: I am well assured of the worth of the Selbys; I have long known them, and think the young man has a great number of good qualities: Astell has, possibly, more ingenious accomplishments; but if he is not a lover — Speak, my dear girl, and speak truly what you think, and what you wish. I have your happiness too much at heart to persuade you to act contrary to your inclination; but tell me frankly, do you prefer Astell?"

This kind speech of my father's, Harriot, did not lessen my confusion. I blushed now because Astell had not the views

he

he was supposed to have; and, to own the truth, I felt a sinking at my heart of which I had never been sensible till that moment. I sat down in the chair nearest to me, and burst into tears.

Do you not pity me now, while you read this? Indeed I wanted all your compassion at that instant, and my excellent parents freely and generously gave me all theirs: they both came to me, took hold of my hands, called me their good girl, their best love, their dear Lucy, and assured me they would do every thing to make me happy. I know not when they would have ceased to comfort me, had not Mr. Astell entered the room.

My disorder was not to be concealed: he saw it immediately: he flew to me, and with his usual eagerness, touched me but too sensibly.

“ My

“My amiable Miss Musgrove,” cried he, seizing my hand, “are you not well? what’s the matter? it kills me to see you thus uneasy.”

I looked down, (I could not speak) till his repeated intreaties to tell him the cause of my trouble, while he almost devoured my hand, made me lift up my eyes: then finding we were by ourselves, I was totally disconcerted, and utterly unable to reply to all his interrogations.—His caresses, at last, beginning to grow too warm, roused me, and I broke from him, nor could his most earnest supplications to speak to him prevail. I broke from him, and shut myself up in my chamber, from whence I am now writing this.——

I am interrupted: my father calls for me: I will finish my letter, if possible, before the post goes out.

[In

[In Continuation.]

For what, my Harriot, do you think my dear father wanted me? Imagine what I felt when he presented Mr. Astell to me as a man whom I was to receive as a lover favoured by him—I can neither describe my confusion nor my joy. I said nothing, 'tis true; but the emotion with which I received the respectful salute he gave me, made all words unnecessary.

We were in consequence of this left together; but how, my friend, shall I paint the delicacy, the transporting tenderness with which he addressed me, or the silly, blushing tremor that fluttered my spirits upon the delightful occasion?

It was some time before I waked from a delirium of happiness; but when I came to enquire into the sudden change of affairs,

I was

I was a little damped to find he had been rather drawn in to make a declaration by the following means. When I left him to retire to my apartment, my father returning to the parlour, perceived Mr. Aftell seemingly very much dispirited, and very eager to learn the cause of my tears, assuring my father he had not been able to persuade me to tell him.

My father said, that he had great reason to believe they were occasioned by a proposal which had been made to me by Mr. Selby, and which I was not inclined to comply with.

Heavens! cried Aftell, and would you force your daughter, would you compel such a dear girl as your Lucy to marry a man whom she does not love? Can Mr. Musgrove, the worthy Mr. Musgrove, act so inconsistently, so contrary to his excellent character?"

“Do not reprove *me*, young man,” replied my father, “while you are yourself guilty of inconsistencies which are almost criminal.”

“I guilty, Sir!” cried he with a look of astonishment, “How! In what manner have I incurred your disapprobation?”

“In the first place,” said my father, “tell me whether you think the man who pretends to feel a passion to which his heart is a stranger, acts like a man of honour: to what purpose are all the assiduities you pay my daughter, when you mean nothing particular by them? These assiduities, Sir, are now become too visible to escape the observation of a parent interested in his child’s felicity; and as your seducing behaviour may not only deceive *her*, but prevent any other worthy man from making

addresses which might, possibly, produce the happiest effects, I must desire you will not call me inhospitable or ill-bred if I wish you to quit my house, as you, at present, want no kind assistance in my power to afford."

Astell, surprized enough before, was now quite confounded: he coloured, he turned pale, and seemed at first at a loss in what sense he ought to take my father's speech: but after having paused for some moments, he appeared to recover himself, declared the sincerest passion for me, which had been, he said, hourly increasing, and begged, in the most submissive manner, to be admitted to pay his addresses to me, and to endeavour to merit my esteem.

My good father, fond of his poor weak girl, could not hide the pleasure which the hopes of gratifying her inclination gave him,

him, yet made some few objections: the principal of which was, the uncertainty of lord Ashburton's consent to such an alliance, saying, that tho' neither my family nor fortune was mean, his lordship might, probably, expect a more advantageous match for an only son.

Astell, upon this, assured him that his father would never controul his inclinations; and still less be inclined to controul them when he knew the charming object on which they were fixed. As a proof of that assertion, he produced a letter from his lordship, received a few days before, wherein he wished him to pitch upon some amiable woman, and added, that provided she was a gentlewoman, and had been properly educated, he would not have him mind fortune or high-birth, as neither of them was absolutely necessary to secure happiness.

This letter, of which my father did not doubt the authenticity, joined to Astell's pressing importunities to be conducted to me, that he might know his fate, and to his repeatedly intreating my father to prevail on me to give him a favourable reception, brought them together to me in the way above related.

For the account of the interview between my father and Astell, preceding that introduction to me, I am obliged to my mother, who, tho' greatly prepossessed, as well as her daughter, in behalf of this insinuating man, is yet, also, of my opinion, that things have rather been hurried, and that very little delicacy has been used upon an occasion where a vast deal was required. There are, indeed, few men so engaging as Mr. Astell—I can only apologize for my father by saying so—but yet I am not satisfied with myself: had not my
 dear

dear father seen my attachment to Astell, would he, charmed as he is with him, have gone so far, do you think? And, notwithstanding Astell's more striking and brilliant exterior qualities, would he not have endeavoured to persuade me to listen to Selby, of whom he has also a high opinion? Dear good man! he has done all that the most indulgent, the best of fathers, could have done for a beloved child; and pray Heaven, the event may answer his most sanguine expectations!

The Selbys, in consequence of this new turn, have left us. My father and Mr. Astell have both written to lord Ashburton; and his son, more enchanting, if possible, than ever, leaves me scarce a moment. I am pleased—and yet I am alarmed—I don't know what I would say. Do but let me see you, do but come only for a few days—

you do not know how necessary you are to
the happiness of

Your Lucy.

LETTER VIII.

The Hon. Edward Affell to lord Selwyn.

SO—the blow is struck, and I am
fairly caught, by all that's lovely.
Yet how could it be avoided? Or, indeed,
how could I quit a creature so perfectly
irresistible?—I *must* marry some time or
other, as I said before—why not now?
especially as the loveliest woman in the
universe appears to have no sort of aver-
sion to me.

I have been taken rather by surprise,
tho' well—no matter—I shall be amply

re-

rewarded—nay, faith! I am as happy, between you and I, as I deserve to be already, that is—don't mistake me, Selwyn, nor imagine any thing in the smallest degree derogatory to the virtue, not even affronting to the modesty of this divine girl, who is delicacy itself—an absolute angel: yet I am sure she loves me, aye, and tenderly too.

I was not out in my penetration with regard to Selby: he was a downright declared lover—Heavens! who could *behold* and not *adore*!—and a devilish clever fellow into the bargain; only too bashful: what a miserable impediment is a *mauvaise honte* in a fine young fellow who wishes to be well with the women: but *my* modesty has been of infinite service to me, for I actually found the poor dear girl in tears, because Selby had made overtures, and because I had not. What a delightful,

innocent creature! So her father, who saw how things were going, gave me to understand that he expected me to be more explicit; and, in short, I was obliged to make—an ho--hour--a--ble tender of my heart and person; and, faith! they were accepted *de bon cœur*. Never did I see people more satisfied with their intended future. As to the dear angel, herself, when I was permitted to approach her upon that occasion, what a delicious confusion she was in! what an animating glow was spread over her lovely face! what a tremor took possession of her whole charming person! The melting languor of her sweet downcast eyes, the tender sighs which issued from her lovely bosom, the entire resignation of her soft, white hand to me, gave me transports unknown to me before; and those transports seemed to be communicated to the bewitching cause of them. I doat on her to a degree
be-

beyond expression? What sensibility in every feature! I am now quite fixed for life—give me joy, Harry: I hope I shall make an tolerable husband—yet let me perish, if I don't mistrust myself—therefore I come not so readily into the scheme. That's a modest confession, however.

Come, Selwyn, have you not some hopes of me? If you was but to see, but to hear this alluring girl, you would be thoroughly certain of my conversion. A man must be an infernal fellow indeed, who can be blind to so much beauty, and insensible to so much merit. There—don't you think this paragraph will make a shining figure in the news-papers when I am fettered? What a word! it damps my spirits a little; however, I shall not be totally domesticated neither—I shall be as young, as elegant in my appearance, my

person will not be less forbidding when the indissoluble knot is tied, and my humour as *enjouée* as ever. The women have no sort of dislike to a married man: they do not fly from him as if he had been bit by a mad dog: some dear indulgent kind creatures will deign to cast an eye of compassion when my wife---(what a monosyllable, Harry) is in the straw, or out of spirits, or out of temper. Out of temper, I think, Lucy can never be. At this instant she stands now before me, blushing ten thousand sweets; and waiting, till I have finished this, to speak to me, like a dutiful girl. Right, Lucy—good daughters and good girls make good wives.—The devil take me for writing so much upon a subject that I have no sort of stomach to—but I will throw aside my letter, and snatch a glowing kiss. So farewell—Harry.

E. A.

P. S.

P. S. I forgot to tell you that lord Ashburton approves of Lucy, meerly from my description of her, and will make a handsome settlement.

LETTER IX.

Miss Wynne to Miss Musgrove.

YOU cannot imagine, my dear Lucy, how sorry I am to be obliged to refuse your earnest, your repeated request, to come down to Woodcot, and just at a time too when I wish to inform myself personally of the real merit of the man who has made so deep an impression upon the gentle heart of my sweet friend: but my aunt Mellish is not well, and I cannot leave my nearest, dearest friend, and so amiable a woman too, so circumstanced; yet I want extremely to see you. Sure, my

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Lucy,

Lucy, you and yours have been rather precipitate in an affair of such great importance in a woman's life. This very charming man may, I hope, turn out to be every thing you wish and desire; but I know not any more than you what I would say: I only know that I love you, and if you should not be as happy as you deserve to be, I shall be miserable.

I am not in spirits to-day; I can't write with my usual vivacity. I am uneasy about my aunt's health: you know I have no other friend, and she will force me out against my inclination. She obliged me a few nights ago to accompany Mrs. Brudenell to the ridotto:—*there* I was honoured with the notice of lord Selwyn, who danced [with me, and we fell, some how, into such a familiar chat that he invited himself to Mrs. Mellish's.

He

He came the next day to know how I did after the fatigue of the evening: he is not a demi-god like your Astell, but a sensible, agreeable creature enough. However, what's all this to you, child?—I cannot write to-day—I have no ideas: besides, they fetch me down to company.

[In continuation.]

Lord Selwyn has been here again. My aunt don't dislike him—she would, indeed, be very nice if she did: but what have we to do with lords? Still less, much less than my dear Lucy, whose birth and fortune will do honour to any man, tho' far inferior to her lovely person and her lover's mind: her humble Harriot, having nothing to boast of, has nothing to expect.

Lord Selwyn is not such a fine gay fellow as you have drawn Astell: he is, tho' young,

young, serious, and, as I said before, sensible, yet extremely amiable.

What does he do here?—Why he pays his court so successfully to my aunt, that his behaviour has put the strangest fancies into her head.

When I look back, and review the wretched stuff I have wrote, I really do not think my letter worth the postage—Lord Selwyn, however, has given me some franks. You will call me a strange wild creature to mention his name so often: you will suppose too that he keeps me in town: positively you are mistaken; my aunt's indisposition alone detains me near her. You are not to be told how sincere my affection is for this valuable woman, who, unlike the majority of parents and relations, won my whole soul at a very early age, by treating me rather as a dear friend, or a beloved

loved sister, than a niece, as an equal in every thing; and by so doing, very soon taught me to form myself by her exemplary conduct, the copying of which would contribute so much to my happiness, as well as redound to my honour: but how far short am I of my excellent original, who is all consideration, mildness, indulgence, and parental affection. She has never forgot that she was once young herself, that we are liable, from want of thought and want of experience, to numberless errors, and to a thousand failings, which that very thoughtlessness naturally inclines us to palliate; rendering us eager to accuse our follies, and too warmly to resent the reproof of them. But this dear, worthy woman, always reproved me with so much mildness, always when there was a necessity for it, and treated me with so much lenity and tenderness, that, in spite of the natural impetuosity of my temper,

I have

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I have been induced to conduct myself with far more discretion than I should otherwise have done. From what dangers may she not have saved me by her prudent corrections? Into what indiscretions might I have fallen had I been uncorrected by her, had I not been so early, so affectionately warned, of the imprudence of yielding to the first emotions of a youthful mind, too often intoxicated with adulation, or giddy from an excessive desire to obtain praises, which are only, perhaps, thrown out to try the strength, and to discover the weakness of our intellects? But to what purpose are these reflections? I began with talking about my dear aunt, and I will end with wishing you all imaginable happiness, in treating you to continue to write every particular relating to yourself, to

Your faithful and affectionate

H. Wynne.

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LETTER X.

Lord Selwyn to the Hon. Edward Astell.

AND so (as you say) you are really, soberly and seriously, going to be married. Didn't I tell you, Astell, that all your flirting with the women would come at last to — matrimony? But, remember how much you have laughed at my stupid plan of domestic felicity; and consider, only consider, what a pretty figure you will make if you should happen to be taken in, and how finely I shall have my revenge, without so much as even wishing for it. However, I am only in jest; for indeed, my friend, you have made so excellent a choice, that if you are miserable in the marriage-state, you must be so thro' your

your own fault. The woman is, really, as you have said, a perfect angel. You start, possibly, at this declaration, and wonder how I came so well acquainted with your mistress.

I have accidentally met with a Miss Wynne, an intimate of Miss Musgrove's, who has given me such a character of her friend, that, if it is not a little too highly coloured (and I make great allowances for the fertility of a lady's imagination, and the exuberance of her language) she must be an inimitable pattern for a wife, and the only creature of her sex now living, perhaps, capable of weaning you from the few foibles which throw too strong a shade over your virtues; for virtues you certainly have, Astell, tho' your passion for flirting too frequently obscures them: however, as your humanity and generosity have ever shone out with considerable lustre, they will,

will, I doubt not, some time or other amply atone for all your failings.—Who, my friend, is without foibles? Not I, for one: and possibly I may be very censurable for viewing the faults of others with too severe an eye—Well, I acknowledge the rigour of my proceedings; but as I firmly believe that every thing in this world is ordered for the best, that we often drive happiness from us, when we might be in possession of it, and that we may draw instruction from incidents apparently the most trifling and absurd, let me, in excuse for the freedom with which I have attacked you, prevail on you to convert my sharp invectives into salutary lessons, by adopting a new mode of life, by ceasing to coquet with the women, and by making the most indulgent husband to the very deserving girl to whom you are going to be married.—

This puts me in mind of Olivia. Pray what have you done with her? What opi-

ate have you administered to lull her conscience asleep? Or has she handsomely resigned you to her rival? But as you cannot answer me immediately—to my own affairs.—

This Harriot Wynne is a pretty, sensible, lively creature, and did not the last epithet more properly belong to her than to any other, might, possibly, occasion no small tumult in my breast: but I never loved, you know, a designing woman, and she is of so very volatile a nature that I shall be afraid to venture. Yet the little gypsy has an unaccountable *je ne sçai quoi* about her, that if I am not careful of my heart, she may rob me of it before I am aware. I am, perhaps, too suspicious; but I cannot help harbouring some doubts that my title and fortune may be the only charms. I am sure, at least, that I can boast of no other attractions, and, therefore, must suppose

pose that these appendages to my person are the only inducements to a woman who has but a small fortune to get me into her power, if she can.

Yours, most affectionately,

Selwyn.

LETTER XI.

Miss Musgrove to Miss Wynne.

HOW unlucky, my dear Harriot, is it for me that you cannot comply with my wishes: yet why, presumptuous creature, as I now feel myself, ought I to expect every desire of my heart to be gratified when I have so much reason to be contented? And yet, believe me, my dear, I cannot be perfectly so while I know you and yours are neither well nor happy. I fear, my Harriot,

riot, that this lord Selwyn has made an impression upon your heart, which will not be easily effaced: but if you have made the same impression upon *his*, and I have no doubts concerning your conquest, I shall look upon your prepossession for him as a most fortunate event. May *you* be as happy with lord Selwyn as I hope to be with Mr. Astell, whose tenderness for me seems to increase hourly.

Lord Ashburton has been with us these last ten days; he is agreeable, polite, and gives me room to believe that he is perfectly satisfied with his son's choice. He has made me several very elegant presents, and has agreed to settlements beyond my expectations, far beyond my deserts. I am not ambitious, Harriot, nor did I ever sigh after riches: a decent sufficiency, with something over to distribute among those less distinguished by the gifts of fortune, tho'

more worthy of them than myself, is the utmost extent of my wishes in regard to a separate establishment from my father and mother; to which I should have been with the greatest difficulty brought to consent upon any terms, had not Mr. Astell been a man uncommonly amiable, a man indeed so every way desirable, that if I thought at all of the marriage-state (a state most earnestly recommended to me both by my father and mother) I must not expect to meet with such an offer again. They have affectionately urged the satisfaction they should feel at leaving me to the care of a worthy agreeable man who really loved me, and though their well-meant motives drew tears from my eyes, and sighs from my heart, at the bare idea of a separation from them—Heaven grant it may be far distant! yet as they are desirous to have me settled, I am happy to be under their direction with regard to my choice.—I
will

will not deny neither, my Harriot, my esteem for Mr. Astell—Nay, I will confess that I love him ; he well deserves such a confession from me : but though in his person, and with his accomplishments, he is superior to any man who has fallen in my way, believe me, my dear friend, I was not allured by them alone : his strong sensibility, the sympathetic pity which he constantly discovered for the sorrows of others, and which prompted him so generously to relieve farmer Smallcrop and his family, prejudiced me chiefly in his favour. *That* single humane action, Harriot, more than all his shining qualities, raises him in my esteem. There is one fault, however, in Mr. Astell, which I want to cure him of : he is too warm, too eager, too violent, in his caresses : in vain does he tell me that nothing but a false modesty prevents my discovering how much I am pleased with his endearments.—I am offended at such assertions—They
either

either shew that he has no favourable opinion of women in general, or that he has met with very bad ones. || Correct me, my Harriot, if I am too severe: a woman should always be gentle while she condemns the failings of a woman. Mildness has made more converts than acrimony: but if he had not been accustomed to take unwarrantable liberties, he would not, I think, attempt them.—Certainly, Harriot, the man who would be happy in marriage ought not to attack the virtue of the woman intended for his wife. Mistake me not, I do not mean that Mr. Astell has gone any such lengths with me: but there is something in his manner which discovers less delicacy than I could wish to see in him. I have hitherto believed that a man would not approach too near, if the woman behaved properly, and yet I am sure I give no indiscreet encouragement.—He certainly wants none.

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I wish

I wish again and again that you were here, neither my father nor my mother can be always with me : they also love to pass their time in their own retired way ; I am therefore left oftener alone with Mr. Astell than I think is necessary : I have gently hinted my thoughts to my mother, but she does not seem to imagine that I have any other reason to desire her company than what arises from the natural modesty of a young girl who has hitherto never received any addresses of this kind before. Were you here, my Harriot, we should be inseparable, and the continual presence of a third person would either divert his attention, or awe him into discretion. We have had one quarrel already : let him beware of the second. The man who loves me as he ought to love me, will also respect me.

Come to me, my dear, if possible,—— but I perceive you are every way engaged, and, therefore, I despair of seeing you.



LETTER XII.

The Hon. Edward Astell to Lord Selwyn.

Ashburton Lodge.

I AM routed, horse and foot: never was there such a cursed affair—What a delicious little prude she is! and yet she is so dear to my heart, so absolutely necessary to my peace, that I must have her or die—Oh! there is no existing without her—yet only think how confounded silly—but, poor girl! she knows nothing of life, has seen nothing of the world—nothing at all—For a woman to fall out with a man just on the point of marrying her, for only ravishing a few liberties—Ridiculous—and with a fellow to whom three fourths of the sex are ready to pull caps

for—Foolish devil!—But you can have no conception of the behaviour of the girl—I'll tell you, then; provoked as I am beyond all bearing with her, yet I doat on her to madness at this moment, and even doat on her for the very conduct which has put me in such a rage.—But to the point.

We had, from my first arrival, been left frequently by ourselves, and undoubtedly, when I was upon the footing of a declared lover, an accepted lover by her father and all her family, there was no restraint laid upon me: no distrust, no suspicions on their part—Good people! they knew how to make allowance for my situation perpetually near so fine a girl, certainly entitled from that very situation to seize some few advantages, without having such a devilish rout made about them.—My emotions ran away with me.—

We were, then, I say, often alone, and I must have been as absolutely stupid and insensible as I am otherwise, had I not taken every opportunity which those *têtes-a-têtes* allowed me—Besides, who could behold such an inviting creature, and hear her declare that she preferred me to every man, and not acknowledge the dear preference by the warmest, the tenderest caresses—And yet—my patience is almost exhausted—would you were here, Harry, for I shall be such a confounded while in telling my tale, that you will wish me fairly at—— Well ! we were sauntering down a green shady walk together in the garden at a distance from the house ; one of my arms encircled her charming waist ; my other hand held hers. The evening itself was enough to tempt one to mischief, if what all creatures are prompted by nature to, can be called so : not a breeze stirred, the thousand dangling leaves

which formed a canopy over our heads, and the feathered songsters were calling upon each other to retire to rest.—

In a field adjoining, the new-mown hay, added to the numerous sweet-smelling shrubs, scattered the richest fragrance: the western sky was beautifully tinged with the rays of the departing sun. Every thing was calm but my heart, which throbbed a thousand alarms to love—But to what purpose do I describe the evening, when the lovely object by my side demands the warmest descriptive powers? Nothing could equal the elegance of her appearance. She was drest in a muslin gown, which flowed negligently over a pale pink petticoat: a black-laced handkerchief only served to shew the whiteness of her neck to greater advantage, a neck and bosom which set my whole soul a madding, a little light hat with amaranthine ribbons shaded her lovely

lovely face, which, from my frequent near approaches, was rather cocked on one side, and gave a pretty coquet air to the most innocent and beautiful countenance in the world. She had stuck some myrtles and roses in her stomacher: the latter of which were far out-blushed by her glowing cheeks, while her bright, waving locks, carelessly played upon her snowy forehead, and her love-darting eyes shot forth such beams of tenderness, that I became absolutely enchanted, perfectly intoxicated, and — In short, Selwyn, I believe I might be wrong: but I could not help taking some — rather unwarrantable liberties — Yet circumstanced as I was, one would have imagined they might have been overlooked. However, when I found that she was neither to be warmed by my endearments to a sensibility lively as my own, nor lulled into a seeming disregard of what I was about, I was so provoked that I

actually threw her on the grass, and I positively believe I should have proceeded to the last extremity, had she not been much stronger than I could have imagined her to be from the great delicacy of her form — By the way, what devilish hypocrites these women are! When they have a mind to be ravished how defenceless they appear, and are as quiet as lambs; while, on the contrary, my lovely, virtuous girl sprung from the ground with an elasticity which actually astonished me — But how shall I describe the look, and repeat the language with which she reproved me while her eyes flashed the keenest resentment! — She struck me in such a manner by the grandeur of her sentiments, that I was rendered totally incapable of performing my purpose. —

“ ’Tis well, Sir,” said she with a voice which while it trembled with anger, pierced my heart with its natural melody, “ ’tis well,

well, Mr. Astell, that you have discovered your disposition while it is in my power to disengage myself for ever from a man so lost to honour, so entirely lost to the respect he owes himself in the person of her whom he has chosen for his wife, as to dare to attempt liberties which must for ever destroy the good opinion she had once formed of him, and which she had flattered herself (sighing) would never have been lessened."

That sigh, Harry, that seeming reluctance to give me up, fed me with hopes that this was a decent parade of virtue which she conceived quite necessary, and that she would be in a very little time just like all the girls whom I have attacked in the same style of gallantry. But, faith! I was most confoundedly mistaken — She is a heroine every inch of her : for when I put on my soft, soothing, penitential face, fell

at her feet, and whined out my deep contrition for the offence I had been guilty of, laying all the blame on the force of *her* charms, and the violence of *my* passion, and so forth, do you imagine that she was in the least moved? Not a jot, by all that's lovely—With all the dignity of a tragedy-princess she turned upon her heel, walked off majestically flourishing her white handkerchief, (poor dear girl! she was sorry to part with me after all) and vowed she would never see me more. In vain I followed, prayed, flattered, and lied like a thousand devils, for I swore, Harry, aye most bitterly too, that I was actually glad I had not succeeded. As my attempt had been only to try her virtue, I told her I was now convinced it was absolutely impregnable, and that my respect, esteem, passion, and all that, increased every moment.—But she replied only, that the man who had dared to suspect her was even
beneath

beneath her contempt, and bridled away from me till I was almost out of breath, and *she* out of hearing: besides, I was really so flustered and so enraged, that I was not in a frame of mind even to endeavour to lure her back again. Who could have imagined that a girl of so apparently mild and gentle a disposition, should be such a virago!—I had flattered myself, I had faith! Harry, coxcomb as I was, that I had charms for all hearts; having never known one of the sex escape me before.

As soon as I got to the house I flew to the glass to see if my person had undergone any change of which I was ignorant: but let me perish if I did not find my teeth as white, my complexion as delicate, my eyes as brilliant as ever: my hair, 'tis true, was a little disordered by the fingers of my charming fury; however, as that derangement was quite of her own doing,

She could not well be disgusted at it. I was also slightly wounded on my hand by her nails in the scuffle, but I really thought the skin looked rather more white from the contrasted red—One would certainly be inclined to believe that nature furnishes those outrageously virtuous women with a power of contracting or extending their claws upon occasion, as porcupines their quills, for I swear I never touched a softer finer hand than Lucy's, and her fingers always appeared to me as neatly pared as if they were kept in order by an artist: yet I dare bet a considerable sum that the dear creature employs no operator for the beautifying either of her hands or feet.—Well—when I had adjusted my dress, and made Brown *r'accommoder* my hair, I ventured into the parlour, to face my injured charmer: but I found only the good old man with marks of real concern in his countenance; and he read me

me so long, but I confess, so sensible a lecture, upon my indiscretion, that I certainly should have become extremely sorry myself, for this attack upon his dear child, as he called her, with his eyes filled with tears, had he not concluded his sermon by desiring me to leave his house immediately, and in a manner which, though polite enough, was at the same time sufficiently peremptory to let me know that I must not hope for any favour.

I endeavoured, however, to extenuate my folly by the very excuses which I had made to Lucy; but he stopped me—
 “No, Sir—your behaviour has excluded all apologies for it: not a single one can be admissible: you have not only affronted me in the grossest manner imaginable, but you have also, by violating the laws of hospitality, discovered a disposition so every way so totally corrupt, that I can never
 look

look upon you again in a respectable light. I have only to thank Heaven, as my child is safe, which I do with the utmost fervour and sincerity, from preserving me from being allied to a person so entirely void of those sentiments which can alone render man an honour to his species."

After such a spirited speech, Selwyn, there was no staying a moment in his house, you know—I made him, therefore, a cool bourange for my carriage to be got ready immediately, and arrived at this place without stopping, from whence I write—and now don't you think that I have had a lucky escape—from matrimony I mean? I tremble, I protest, to consider how nearly I was being fettered for life; and yet my heart is perfectly at ease. I love this dear girl after all, and the noble resistance she has made has only rendered her ten thousand times dearer to me. There is an
inex-

inexpressible, unaccountable sort of a something in virtue which is superior to any other charm about the sex : but did that truth operate powerfully on all women, what the devil would become of us fellows who are born with a rooted aversion to marriage !—However, as heartily as I abhor the odious tie, in my overtures to Miss Mulgrove I was really serious, and would still most willingly marry her tomorrow if she would have me—Something assures me that I can never be completely happy without her. Had I conquered, perhaps I should have ere now told another tale---but, in short, I am half distracted. I hate myself: and yet I am not so sorry for my *coup d'essai*, as wild at my disappointment.

E. A.

P. S. This moment I have received a letter from Olivia; now to expel one poison by another.

L E T.

LETTER XIII.

Miss Musgrove to Miss Wynne.

HOW much, how long, have I wished to see you, my dear friend ! and yet just now something has happened too gross to be related even to my Harriot, the dearest friend of my bosom.—Let it be sufficient to say that Mr. Astell has behaved in a manner which obliged my father to desire him to leave Woodcot immediately ; and when you hear me pour out my grateful thanks to the almighty preserver of the innocents, you will not be at a loss to guess the cause of his dismissal for ever from our family. I have, indeed, the greatest reason to acknowledge the interposition of Heaven for my deliverance, as I have escaped

caped from two calamities, from violation by the person of whom I had the highest opinion, and from marriage with a man of such dissolute principles: tho' I much question whether he ever had any serious thoughts of being honourably connected with me.—

From this disagreeable event, therefore, in our family, be upon your guard, my Harriot, against all men, and particularly against lord Selwyn, in whose favour I see plainly you are so very much prepossessed: but remember, Harriot, he is a man, and consequently *born to deceive*. He is also one of Astell's intimates: not the better for being so, give me leave to say.

Two or three days before he left Woodcote, Astell received a letter from this lord Selwyn, wherein he told me, he mentioned
a Miss

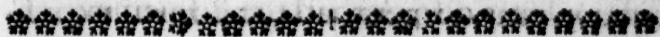
a Miss Wynne, who had spoken very highly of me. Shall I also tell you, my dear, he added, that lord Selwyn was not indifferent to the charms of my friend; but that he had some suspicions of her being a designing girl, and of having an intention to draw him in for his title and fortune. I assured him you was above all such detestable meanness, and would, I was certain, never consent to marry a man whom you did not really love. You see therefore, my Harriot, that men are but too much alike: fly, therefore, before it is too late from London, and from your admirer, to your

Faithful and affectionate

L. Musgrove.

P. S. I hope Mrs. Mellish is better. My father and mother add their intreaties to mine that she will accompany you to Wood-

Woodcot—The air, we imagine, will be of considerable service to her. This truly sincere invitation should not have been left to a postscript, had my spirits been fully recovered from their late flutter.



L E T T E R XIV.

Lord Selwyn to the Hon. Edward Astell.

I HAVE not been more shocked a great while than by the receipt of your last. How could you, Astell, behave in such a manner to any woman whom you pretended to love with honour? and to such a woman, an angel let me rather say, for well does she merit that appellation. How could you so far degrade yourself? You are, I know, capable of many follies—the most perfect, indeed, among us, are not without—but
who

who would have believed you could have been guilty of such an attempt, and upon a woman too whom you had chosen from the rest of her sex, chiefly for her virtues, for your wife? Oh! Astell! but I cannot tell you all I think---I hope, ere this, reflection cuts deeper than the keenest expressions I can make use of, to make you sensible of your error: for I will be candid enough to believe, that your last letter was hurried off in the height of your resentment against a worthy amiable creature, who deserves more respect and affection, than even the best of men can treat her with. Yet I cannot but give credit to the conclusion of it, wherein you rejoice at having escaped from marriage. You certainly never intended to be serious: you made honourable proposals, the better to disguise the atrocious design you afterwards endeavoured to carry into execution. What cruel deceit! First to gain so valuable a heart,

heart, and then to tear it to pieces by the most unpardonable insult that could be offered to any woman, more especially to a woman with such exalted principles, a woman so every way desirable---and meerly on account of the resistance which she made to a man whom she even loved. Glorious resistance! what a noble conquest over the passions! I am indeed quite charmed with her exemplary behaviour; and the very carriage which has excited so boyish a resentment in *you*, would have been sufficient to attach *me* to her for ever, had she no other merit. I am so displeased with you, that I have no heart to speak of any other woman to you, but the amiable, the injured Lucy: yet the distress in which I soon expect to see Harriot when she hears of her friend's disappointment, is ever uppermost in my thoughts. Were I assured that Harriot is as good a creature as Miss Musgrove-----she gains upon me strangely
— but

---but you are not worthy of my confidence at present. Correct the scandalous errors in your conduct, so unbecoming, so shamefully degrading, and be again the esteemed friend of

Your

Selwyn.

LETTER XV.

Lord Ashburton to Mr. Musgrove.

S I R,

I AM so much ashamed and concerned at my son's unjustifiable behaviour, which has occasioned his dismissal from your family, that I scarce know how to address myself to you. I do not pretend to make any apology for his conduct: it will admit of no palliation; but his present

con-

condition, as much as he has deserved it, is (I write as a father) to be pitied, tho' his conduct is not to be vindicated. His remorse and despair on having been guilty of so great a failure with respect to Miss Musgrove, the extreme propriety of *her* behaviour upon so delicate an occasion, added to the almost certainty of his being beloved by her before his audacious attempt, have increased his passion for her to so violent a degree, that he must be miserable if he has no hopes of being one day received by her as your son. The wretchedness, therefore, of his present condition, has induced me to endeavour to procure the young lady's pardon for him, when you and she think he has suffered enough for his insolent affront to her virtue. Consider, Mr. Musgrove, we are all of us, more or less, imperfect creatures: consider too that young men, especially, are but too frequently carried away by their impetuous passions,

before

before they have time or power to stop them in their course. My son most solemnly declares, that he had not the least sinister intention with regard to Miss Musgrove; but that the place, the hour, the situation they were in, the uncommon beauty of her figure, her avowed affection for him, all served to inspire him with feelings which he found absolutely irresistible. But, in case of his being re-admitted to visit the lady, he declares, that the wish of his heart is, to be united to her by the strongest ties the very instant he sees her, if she will but pardon and accept of him: or should a distant day be more agreeable to her, he will wait, with all the patience the ardor of his passion will allow, till she fixes the completion of his happiness; and promise never to desire to see her alone, till the moment she receives him as her husband.

I
Reflect

EDWARD ASTELL. 97

Reflect a little, Mr. Musgrove, before you entirely condemn my son; remember that we were once young ourselves. Make some allowance for the natural warmth of certain constitutions, and condescend to receive Astell again into your family; as nobody can have a more earnest desire to be related to it than he has, nor can any person have more respect for Miss Musgrove, than her and your

Most obedient servant

Ashburton.

LETTER XVI.

The Hon. Edward Astell to Mr. Musgrove.

I WANT words, Sir, to describe the anxiety and despair which I have deservedly endured, ever since my banishment

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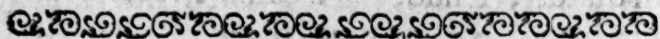
from the sight of Miss Musgrove, and should, at the very instant you insisted on my leaving your house, have thrown myself at your feet to intreat you to procure your daughter's pardon for me, had I not feared that you were both, at that moment, too much incensed against me even to listen to my request. Time has, I hope, wrought some change in my favour, by giving you room to reflect on the impossibility of our being always able to keep our passions in subjection. Believing myself to be very near becoming your son, I — but no excuse can, I am sensible, be made on my part: let, then, the irresistible beauty, the enchanting tenderness, of your dear amiable daughter plead for me. I could not gaze on her, I could not listen to her melodious accents unmoved, unmelted. I ought, I confess, to have kept my desires within due bounds, till I was authorized to call her mine. Would to Heaven *that* ceremony

mony was past, and that I was, this moment, in a situation to implore your affection as my father. Consider, Sir, that the lovely disorder of the charming Lucy at the time I was become unworthy of her regard, her noble resistance, and her proper, but discouraging resentment, have increased my esteem, my respect, my love for her to such a degree, that life is a burden without her. If I adored her when I knew not half her virtues, what, do you imagine, must be my sentiments now? *You*, Sir, cannot be ignorant of the superiority with which your lovely daughter shines above the rest of her sex. I sigh, I die with desire at this moment to write to her, to tell her all that my heart, glowing with the most ardent, the most respectful passion, feels for her. I dare not, however, address her, but through your intercession. Permit me, therefore, Sir, to intreat you to pity me; and suffer me to prevail on you, by the sincerity of

my repentance, to influence Mrs. Musgrove in my favour, who was once my friend; and when both of you join to solicit Miss Musgrove to pardon me, I shall begin to hope she will no longer be inexorable to her and your ever

Most obedient and devoted servant,

E. Astell.



LETTER XVII.

Miss Musgrove to Miss Wynne.

(With the two foregoing ones inclosed.)

AS I imagine that my Harriot is eager to know every thing relating to her Lucy, tho' she has not yet had time since my last to tell me so, I inclose copies of lord Ashburton's and Mr. Astell's letters to my father, which we received yesterday.

My

My father, after having read those letters once by himself, and then to my mother, they both came into my room, and giving one of them to me, desired my opinion.

I knew the hand immediately: I trembled: I could not help my confusion: I felt my face in a glow. Returning it immediately, I said, "I cannot receive any thing from Mr. Astell, Sir."

"My good girl," replied my father — —
 "Don't hurry yourself, my dear Lucy," said my mother, with the most affectionate look, "take time, my dear; you once thought well of Mr. Astell: he has acted like an inconsiderate young man; but tho' his behaviour must be condemned by every body, as he has confessed his fault to his father, and as they both appear much concerned." —

“I am sure, my dear madam,” said I, interrupting her, “you cannot say any thing to excuse Mr. Astell; nor do my father and you, I think, wish me to accept of him now.”

“No, my child,” said my good father, with the most affecting tenderness, “no, my Lucy; but your mother and I know that you once loved him: you had our approbation to love him; and tho’ you have behaved with a noble spirit, you may have relented: young minds are forgiving, and you may one day be sorry for having refused to yield to the solicitations of lord Ashburton and his son: neither your mother nor I, my love, can see our Lucy, who is so deserving, unhappy; otherwise, we should, doubtless, refuse instantly all overtures from that quarter with contempt.”

“Do

“ Do so, Sir, said I: do so, this moment, my dear father.”

“ My dearest mother,” continued I, wiping my eyes, and embracing them both, for I saw them both ready to weep, “ can you think your Lucy so weak, so little worthy of the pains you have taken to instruct her, as not to be able to conquer an inclination for a man which she never could have indulged, had he not appeared to deserve it?”

“ Dear good child, cried they both, folding me in their arms, how happy, how very happy you make us!”——

My father then read the inclosed letters to me, and when he had finished them, I begged he would make what reply he thought proper; being certain that he could not make any with which I should

be displeased. He instantly took his pen and wrote the following lines to lord Ashburton:

My Lord,

After the behaviour of Mr. Astell in *my* family, it is impossible I should ever be expected to look upon him in any other light, than as a man whom I never wish to see again. Were *you* in *my* situation, my lord, you would think as I do. Yet, that neither your lordship nor Mr. Astell may imagine me too rigid, or too much blinded by resentment—(tho' if ever resentment is laudable, it is on such an occasion as this) I have consulted my daughter, who is entirely of my opinion. I cannot conclude, without declaring my sincere compassion for your lordship: as a father myself, I must feel for every man who has a child capable of acting in opposition to the dictates of virtue;
and

and that Mr. Astell may never again violate the laws of honour, is the sincere wish of

Your lordship's humble servant.

What say you, Harriot, to my father? Is he not the kindest, the worthiest of men? The letter was sent directly, and the servant was ordered to say it required no answer. But were not my revered, my amiable friends, very considerate to their girl? They feared that her heart was too deeply touched to bear to give him up; but surely, my Harriot, the woman cannot be worthy of happiness, if she places her happiness in being united to a man of the most abandoned turn. What a thousand pities that so many estimable qualities should be so obscured by the uncontrolled sallies of a licentious disposition! I will say no more, however, upon this subject, which I wish to blot from my memory—let me turn to

106 HISTORY of the Hon.

a more pleasing topic—I flatter myself with the hopes of seeing you here with Mrs. Mellish soon: but should you be prevented from gratifying my wishes, be so kind as to return the inclosed letters by the first opportunity, to

Yours, most affectionately,

L. M.

LETTER XVIII.

The Hon. Edward Astell to Lord Selwyn.

AS soon as I had dispatched my last to you, I cursed myself for a coxcomb, and would have given a considerable sum to have had it back again ere it reached your hand.

I left

I left Mr. Musgrove in a kind of pet, and wrote to *you* in a kind of passion : but when reflection took place, Lucy rose to my imagination in all the majesty of affronted virtue, in all the loveliness of un-
 fullied innocence : I became restless and unhappy.—

Upon my first arrival at the Lodge, I determined not to acquaint my father with the real cause of my quitting Woodcot so abruptly ; for, to confess the truth, Harry, I was ashamed of myself for having acted like a rascal, and more ashamed to declare myself one : but the moment my love for this dear, dear girl, got the better of my pride, I was half mad till I related the whole to him, and till I had prevailed on him to assist me in trying to bring about a reconciliation.—But the sweet creature is inexorable—Well !—possibly, she may think it necessary to be so for a time—mean

while I shall have opportunity to adjust matters with Olivia, who has been almost distracted to know what was become of me—As I had sworn by all that's solemn to follow her down to Bristol, and marry her, she must undoubtedly have been not a little surprized at not either seeing me, or hearing a syllable from me in near three months.

Your letter is just this instant arrived.

Faith! 'tis a stinger—what cutting reproofs! but I really deserve them all: I do, by my soul.—However, say what you will, Selwyn, I seriously and honourably intended to marry Lucy, and would give two thirds of my fortune at this moment if she would have me.—And now I think of it, you may help me to make up this difference at last: you are intimate with her favourite; and as I swear I am a sincere

cere penitent, you may throw in a few handsome things in your sensible, sedate way, which may bring us all right about again.—Do, dear Harry, if you love me, unless you actually have a mind to drive me headlong to the devil, to punish me for all my sins.—Were I but once married to this angel, she would, I am persuaded, save both my body and soul.

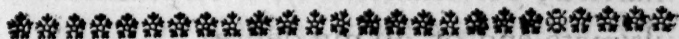
Now, positively, Selwyn, you owe me some reparation for the shocking freedoms you took with me in your last letter; freedoms which every fellow of spirit but myself would have resented: but I know you are sincerely my friend, and therefore take every thing as it was meant. So, my dear Selwyn, go immediately to Miss Wynne, and make use of all your powers of pleasing to serve me—You may safely swear by every thing that's sacred, that I am become a new man; I shall be truly so
in

in every sense of the word as soon as I am married; for matrimony is at present the ultimate end of all my desires.

Is it not strange—passing strange, Harry, that I, of all men, who had so entire an abhorrence to that bugbear marriage, should have been so very near it twice, and within so short a time? My fall from my phaeton saved me once: what destroyed the *hero* who gave a name to my *machine*, gave new life to *me*; but I have again, like him, made a cursed plunge, by my own folly.—Reach out therefore, with expedition, your friendly hand to save your

E. A.

LET.



L E T T E R XIX.

Miss Wynne to Miss Musgrove.

I HAVE heard almost every thing, my dearest Lucy, that has passed between you and Mr. Astell from lord Selwyn, related with a delicacy which increased his own consequence in my eyes, and at the same time threw an additional lustre on *your* character. You have acted nobly, my excellent friend; and my lord is so charmed with your conduct, that he only wants the sight of you to make him yours for ever.—Oh Lucy! can I say, I should be sorry at his seeing you; when, possibly, no man in the world is so deserving of you.—Can I say this, and be your true friend? *I am that* friend, for I will not now mar-

ry

ry lord Selwyn, were he ready to take me this moment; a most unlikely event!— Yet I never saw a more amiable man, nor did I ever hear any man more highly spoken of. But enough of this subject—for the present.—

My dear aunt is better, tho' not quite well, and joins with me in making all possible acknowledgements for Mr. and Mrs. Musgrove's kind invitation, added to yours; but she cannot, at this time, quit London, nor can I leave *her*: else would I fly with the sincerest satisfaction to my dear Lucy, who will, I hope, make me amends for the loss of her company, by long and frequent letters to her

Affectionate

H. Wynne.

LET-



LETTER XX.

From the same to the same.

I SHOULD not so soon again have written to you, my dear, had I not had a long and interesting conversation with lord Selwyn: *you* were entirely the subject of it. Mr. Astell, it seems, has employed his friend to use all his influence with me (supposing it by the way not to be small) to prevail on you to re-instate him in your favour, and in such a manner too that I am half persuaded to wish I may succeed. Had he begun by assuring me that his friend never desired to offend, that he was a very worthy creature, and so forth, I should have looked upon his lordship as a person who had a very mean opinion of my

my

my understanding, by supposing me capable of being so grossly deceived: but he has given me a full description of his friend's character. He tells me that he is, perhaps, one of the finest figures that ever was seen, with a countenance animated with the glow of health: that he has languishing, intelligent eyes, white, even teeth, and such an air of sensibility throughout, that from his first appearance in the world he was a distinguished favourite among the women.—This distinction, and his natural taste for vanity and flutter, have gained him the appellation of the *handsome flirt* from some people; and indeed he hardly ever appears any where in public without having the admiring eyes of every body fixed on him. He has also, my lord says, an exceeding good understanding, and bating this one error, (of the capital kind indeed, he allows it to be) a very good heart: he means, by that expression

pression a heart open to humanity, benevolence, and generosity, which feels for, which wishes to relieve the distresses of his fellow creatures—That he is finely accomplished you have confessed: can there then be a more desirable man? Lord Selwyn declares that he knows his disposition to be naturally amiable, and ventures to affirm that you have it in your power alone to fix the rover, and to make him every thing he ought to be, as he never heard him speak so highly, so rapturously of any woman before: he is certain also, that by living a very few years with a woman of your character, he would be brought to a right way of thinking, and become an honour to society.

So far lord Selwyn advances his own opinion, though he has not forgot to repeat all his friend's vows and protestations, that on you, on you, depends his eternal happiness, or everlasting misery.

Now I can very easily conceive that a man who has once loved you well enough to offer up his darling liberty for you, will not be mighty happy without you, unless he should meet with another exactly your counterpart: but to find a counterpart he might travel through the three kingdoms in vain.

You see, my Lucy, however, that I do not presume to advise, still less to persuade you, sensible that the insult you have received cannot—perhaps, ought not, to be forgiven; not, at least, without the most mature deliberation. As you are blest with parents uncommonly discreet, *they*, certainly, my dear, are the properest people to consult upon so delicate an occasion: in how exemplary a manner have they already acted? Were all fathers and mothers so considerate, so indulgent, I am inclined to believe we should hear of fewer
journies

journies to Scotland; yet I should neither have done justice to lord Selwyn, nor to Mr. Astell, nor to yourself, if I had concealed what I have just communicated. Write, therefore, immediately to me, my dear, and tell me how far you approve of what I have said, not omitting your resolution in consequence of it.



LETTER XXI.

Miss Musgrove to Miss Wynne.

MY dear, dear Harriot, your letter was too interesting not to demand an immediate answer; tho' as my father is just seized with the gout, I shall not be able to attend long to my pen: he is too good to be neglected. But I am in haste to tell you, my friend, that Mr. Astell

never

never can be accepted by me. I shall not enter into a long detail either of his faults or his perfections: perhaps such a detail would prove me indiscreet. Perhaps—it is better for myself to forget him—no matter—tell lord Selwyn that I never can marry Mr. Astell, but charge him not to say any thing else to him about me, if the compliments he pays me are in the slightest degree sincere: but, henceforward, you and he must pardon me, my dear, for distrusting the whole sex. May you, my Harriot, find them as just as I wish them to be, for your sake: may you find lord Selwyn particularly so, who, if his character answers your description, undoubtedly deserves my amiable friend: why then your resolution to refuse an offer so desirable? a resolution at once unnatural and unnecessary: for, say what you will, you certainly love him—but time presses on—I can only add one earnest request—never mention

Mr.

Mr. Astell to me again. This request, my dear friend, will, I am assured, be immediately granted, when I can open my heart to you in the manner I wish to do: but I cannot make the wished disclosure till we meet. Let your confidence, therefore, in the propriety of my conduct upon this single occasion, be shewn by your writing on every other with the greatest freedom. Be silent concerning Mr. Astell, and I shall be satisfied. I see all my errors—I know my own weakness, and I, perhaps, only approve of myself in this one prohibition. By our long and affectionate friendship, therefore, my dear Harriot, let me conjure you to oblige

Your ever faithful

L. M.



L E T T E R XXII.

Lord Selwyn to the Hon. Edward Aftell.

AFTER having said all that could be said in your favour to Miss Wynne, I waited for her friend's answer, who absolutely rejects you for ever, and will not even hear you spoken of.—I at first hesitated, not knowing whether I should venture to transmit so mortifying a reply to you; but when I considered the volability of your disposition, and the satisfaction with which you mentioned the renewal of your design upon Olivia, I began to fancy that your disappointment with regard to Miss Musgrove would not prove fatal—I may, therefore, write away with severity, without fearing any ill consequences from it—But I have other matters

ters to exercise my pen about—matters still nearer my heart.

By acknowledging yourself a coxcomb, by paying so just a deference to the virtues of this lovely, charming Lucy, and by being so willing to make her all the reparation in your power, you have pacified me for the present: only take care, Astell, if you deceive Olivia also, I give you up for ever—But as there must be time allowed for the completion of your reformation, let me prate a little about my own affairs.

This Harriot Wynne is the most altered creature that can be imagined within these few weeks: I thought her much too giddy upon our first acquaintance, though otherwise extremely agreeable: her levity seemed to be excessive, but her vivacity was exquisitely pleasing: I wished, however, that she was more serious, because I looked

upon her propensity to company, flutter, and dissipation, as entirely incompatible with a tender passion——How changed is the dear girl? how very different? how infinitely more amiably alluring? To what must I attribute all this unexpected but agreeable *retenüe* in her carriage; this soft, this pleasing melancholy, this apparently tender languor which has taken possession of her whole person?—I am not like you, Astell; I have not your attractions: nor do I endeavour to *m'adoniser* to every pretty woman who comes in my way; nor have I vanity enough, like you, sufficient to suppose that no woman can resist me.—Yet there is something in Miss Wynne so extremely resembling inclination, that if it is not inclination I will never believe the evidence of my eyes again, when the fair sex come under their inspection. I am, however, so fearful of being deceived, that I hardly dare trust my own remarks, lest
I should

I should have made them in consequence of having seen my favourite object in a false light.—

I have had long, sensible, and affecting conversations with Harriot upon the passion of love, which arose from the endeavours I used to make her as strenuous an advocate for you as I was myself: she has discovered so excellent an understanding, so refined a taste, and such delicate sensibility, that I am become really enamoured with her.—But that I might not be quite rendered incapable of reasoning myself out of danger, should there actually be any encouraging sentiments so new to my heart, I began to leave off making regular visits, and by degrees absented myself for a whole week—I will not tell you what this self-denial cost me, but I will relate every particular concerning her behaviour on the change in my *manœuvres*, that you, who

are an adept in these matters, may tell me how far I may depend upon my penetration.

After the absence of a few weeks, I dropped in as if by accident; it was in the evening: she was sitting alone, with her head leaning on her hand; but the moment I appeared, started, while the most beautiful colour tinged her complexion for a moment: a death-like paleness then succeeded: the most affecting melancholy I ever beheld appeared in her features, and she seemed to have been weeping.

In this moving situation she was irresistible: she touched my very soul.

“Have you not been well, said I, since I saw you? or has any thing happened to give you uneasiness?”

She blushed like scarlet at those harm-

less

less questions, and replied, after a little hesitation, that a pain in her head had hindered her from going out with Mrs. Mellish.

“Will you, then, give me leave to stay with you till her return? As you appear to me to want amusement, I will try to recollect something that may tend to raise your spirits.”

“You will oblige me, said she, by so doing. — She was then silent.”

Shall I confess, Ned, I was disappointed? I was weak enough to expect she would have taken notice of my long absence, and possibly, complained that she had not seen me a great while. —

Her silence disconcerted me, tho’ I immediately called myself a thousand fools for being disconcerted. We were, therefore, both mute for some time. —

At last, directing her dear intelligent eyes towards me, "I think," said she, "you don't seem more disposed to be lively than myself; are you not well, my lord?"

This interrogation revived me: it seemed, I thought, to express a kind of tender inquietude; and it seemed, I also fancied, to demand the reason of my long separation from her. I was silly enough to be pleased; nay, more, I was transported.

Snatching her hand with an eagerness not to be controuled, I carried it to my lips with inconceivable ardor—it trembled excessively, and she appeared in the most enchanting disorder.—On a sudden, withdrawing it hastily from me, she darted at me a look of ineffable disgust.

I was affected beyond expression; I
could

could not bear so abrupt, so chilling an alteration in her, and said, with a look, and in a tone which discovered every emotion of my soul, "Why this cutting aversion? what have I done to deserve it?" Aversion! my lord, said she, with a dejected air, and turned from me; but I saw tears roll in large drops down her face, in spite of all her endeavours to hid them.

I could hold no longer, tenderness got the better of every thing, I caught her in my arms, dried her tears, and pressed her face to mine. She seemed at first almost insensible of what I was doing. I intreated her with all the eloquence I was master of, to tell me why she wept.

She at length recovered, and broke from me, with her dear face covered with blushes: then turning again, caught hold of my hand, and pressing it, said, with a gentle sigh,

figh, "do not, oh! do not think meanly of me, my lord."—

I was going to reply, when Mrs. Mellish that moment appeared. I stayed the evening with them, and strove, by every assiduity and attention in my power, to restore Harriot to her usual tranquility; but my efforts were ineffectual.

Write to me immediately.—What do you think of her behaviour? I shall not proceed farther till I hear from you, unless I have the most animating encouragement.

Adieu.

L E T.



LETTER XXIII.

The Hon. Edward Astell to Lord Selwyn.

I AM in such a confounded hurry, and at the same time so devilishly out of humour, because you have not succeeded for me in my affair about Lucy, that you couldn't have chosen a more unlucky moment to ask questions: yet, on second thoughts, I cannot be such an ungrateful rascal as to neglect the friend who has endeavoured to serve me. It is certainly *not* your fault, that my angel—for she *must* be mine—is still unrelenting—and, by the way, *your* girl is in as fine a melting mood as a man would wish her to be—take her while she is warm, Harry. She will do; my life to nothing.

I have seen Olivia: she came half way to meet me. An absence of three months made the dear creature as keen——. We shall set out to-morrow for Windsor. Direct your next to me there, and, mind me, lose no time with your Harriot.

LETTER XXIV.

Lord Selwyn to the Hon. Edward Astell.

YOU have undone me with your nonsense: I don't know whether I was ever so angry with you in my life: yet, upon cool deliberation, you are not to blame neither: only so by giving me false hopes; but take things as they happened.

I straid from Mrs. Mellish's, as I told you I would, till I received your answer; and then flew thither on the wings of love.

I found

I found Harriot paler and more dejected than before. She smiled, however, with satisfaction at the sight of me; and Mrs. Mellish told me, that I had deserted them.

"Not quite, madam, said I, as she was leaving the room, and to convince you that I speak truth, you will see me here more frequently than ever." I little thought what

an involuntary falsehood I then uttered—

she soon afterwards left us together. I sat

down by Harriot, took her hand in mine,

and asked her if she still suffered by the

head-ach. "I have not been perfectly well,

said she, since I saw you last." "How I doat

on you for that gentle reproof, replied I,

pressing her hand; but indeed, Harriot, I

should have called the next day to see how

you did, had not a particular affair detained

me [your unmeaning letter, Astell.] But

if you can forgive this one seeming neglect,

(tho' you were all the time not a single

moment from my thoughts) my future

conduct

conduct shall make you large amends.— She answered with so much good humour, with such a softness in her look and voice, that I pressed her to my bosom, thanked her for her condescension, and made a full declaration of my love, with the most serious offer of my person and fortune. Her face was crimsoned with blushes while I spoke: she trembled, and her bosom heaved with quick succeeding sighs, which actually made me hope that I had given her a pleasure almost too great to be acknowledged but by the violence of her emotions.— Guess my astonishment at her drawing back her hand from mine, and telling me, in a faltering voice, that she was obliged to me for the honour I had done her, but that she could not think of marrying.— I was, indeed, altogether confounded.— I thought I could not have been so thorough a dupe as to be mistaken in all those signs of inclination, and found myself really

too

too much disconcerted to reply at first: as soon as I recovered my voice, however, I said, "And can you actually, be serious, Miss Wynne? Have you, positively, made a resolution not to marry? Or are you prepossessed in favour of some happier man?"

—"There is no man upon earth, said she, whom I esteem like lord Selwyn."—

"Amazing, answered I, and yet you refuse me: but it is possible, my dear Harriot, to think well of one man, and yet to love another; and I confess, I believed I had encouragement sufficient from your carriage to me, to hope for a return of affection as ardent as my own." I stopped—I

was heartily chagrined, I own, and waited her reply, with my eyes fixed on her face.—

She burst into tears.—I was a second time astonished, to a greater degree than I was before: I was also affected by them. "What mean those tears, said I, throwing my arm round her; do you repent of having been

so

for unkind to my love? And are you sorry for the vexation you have given me"?—

"I would, if possible, replied she, prevent your ever having any vexation; but— but— I cannot marry, my lord." "You then must prefer another man." "Were all the men upon earth to offer me their hands I would not accept of *one*; I prefer no man to your lordship," (still weeping.)—"Then dry your tears, my amiable Harriot, and make me happy, by promising to be for ever mine," said I, kissing her cheek, wet with them.—

"Do not ask me, my lord, what I must refuse: I cannot be yours; but be assured, if that assurance will give you any satisfaction, that I never will be another's."—

"These are riddles, madam, which I cannot comprehend." "If you wish to see me tolerably easy, my lord, solicit not an explanation of them. I cannot talk any longer upon this subject. May you be ever blest as you deserve to be, and when you *do* [think of me, think favourably."

With these words she started from me, and quitted the room, leaving me in a situation not to be described. It was some time before even Mrs. Mellish came down to me, who told me, upon my enquiring after her niece, that she was not at all well, and could not come out of her chamber that evening. I expressed, what I felt, great concern at her indisposition; and took the opportunity to ask Mrs. Mellish, if she knew why her niece had first encouraged, and afterwards refused me. She assured me that she was ignorant of the motives from which she acted, and was even surprized at her carriage; knowing that she had always declared the highest esteem for me.—“Esteem, madam, said I, is very different from love; and possibly a gentleman whom I saw with Mrs. Wynne here when I first became acquainted with her, may be the favoured lover.” What! Mr. Westcombe? said Mrs. Mellish: no—

I can

I can assure you, she never encouraged *him*, and has lately been always *denied* when he came to the house: no, my lord, your lordship is the only man who could ever make her think seriously." "It is but to very little purpose, I am afraid, madam, said I, with a sigh, which I could not, which I did not indeed wish to restrain, at least to my own happiness."—And truly, Astell, I find myself the more sensibly touched at this amiable girl's refusing me, as her refusal was entirely unexpected.

I sent next morning to know how she did, and was informed that she had a fever. She is better, however; so they tell me, for I cannot get a sight of her. To what purpose, indeed, should I see her? I cannot see her without feeling my passion increased for her? There is some unaccountable reason for all this, which I am not able to discover: time however, as you say, may
be

be my friend: but, I assure you, this disappointment gives me no small uneasiness.

LETTER XXV.

The Hon. Edward Astell to Lord Selwyn.

Windfor.

I AM sorry, actually sorry, Selwyn, that you have been so *bummed* by your girl: but the whole sex are capricious, extravagantly fantastical, my dear Lucy Musgrove excepted, who has not a single fault. Never, among the infinite variety whom I have encountered, never did I meet with one so perfectly amiable, so uniformly good. Upon my soul, her person, beautiful as it is, is the least part of her value. I must ever regret the loss of her: not even my happiness with Olivia can banish her a moment

moment from my mind; tho' Olivia is certainly a very fine girl, and distractedly fond of me. Poor fool! that fondness made me successful, without the help of the parson, in spite of her vows and her protestations. Oh! how she vowed and swore never, no never to yield: but I outswore her, and we—that is, *I* begin to be rather sick of an intercourse, the charms of which ceased with its novelty. Yet, if I *do* leave her, I will leave her handsomely: she ought to be paid for her condescension; nor do I believe that I should have conquered so soon, had she not been alarmed with the fear of losing me entirely. Thank Heaven! all women are not like Lucy. However, let me perish if I don't think that Lucy loved me dearly. Sweet girl!—I cannot forget her, Harry: every grace, every enchanting charm of the lovely sex, is to be found in her: every charm, personal and intellectual.

L E T-

LETTER XXVI.

Lord Selwyn to the Hon. Edward Astell.

I MUST write—I cannot help it: I have been disturbed beyond measure about this girl, this Harriot: she has been very ill—she is recovering, but refuses to admit me. Strange!—why did she ever give me hopes, if she intended at the same time to drive me to despair? I love her, and yet I almost despise myself for loving her. To be so taken in!—Of late, 'tis true, she has appeared to be overwhelmed with dejection, and to have no design at all: I wish with all my soul, that you had not behaved so indiscreetly to her charming friend: I might, ere now, have known the real cause of so sudden a flying off. There must be
some

some mystery which I cannot develope—
 would I had never seen her!—Had not you
 behaved so scandalously to Miss Musgrove,
 you might have been, at this juncture, of
 special service to me: but indeed, Astell,
 you grow quite an abandoned fellow. I
 could smile at your follies; but I should
 injure both you and myself, not to take
 notice of, and not to condemn your vices.
 You have, in some parts of your behaviour,
 discovered neither the man of honour nor
 the gentleman. How cruel, nay how
 mean is it, to endeavour to gain the affec-
 tions of a woman, without ever designing
 to make a return! to destroy the peace and
 reputation of an innocent young creature
 meerly out of wantonness! To deprive her
 of that felicity which is inseparable from
 virtue, and expose her to the scorn and se-
 verity of a censorious world, only for the
 momentary gratification of a fugitive pas-
 sion, too gross to be thus indulged; and,
 possibly,

possibly, to entail years of sorrow and shame upon one of the most beautiful, exemplary, and contented beings, before you deluded her by your insinuating and irresistible adulation.

You will, I know, tell me, that if she really had been so good a creature, she would have stood firm and unshaken, in spite of all the eloquence of your eyes, and the rhetoric of your tongue; and that, if girls will be fools, men are in the right to take advantage of them. Human nature, 'tis true, is frail, and is sometimes unable to repel the attacks of temptation: but must the *tempted* be always given up without mercy; and must the *tempter*, the only guilty person indeed, be excused? and is there no allowance to be made for those poor girls who fall victims to pride, pleasure, or a passion too tender to be conquered by reason, by their seducers? and
ought

ought not the very tenderness which they discover for us, to inspire us with pity and affection sufficient to palliate the failings which we have occasioned, and to prompt us to make all the reparation in our power? Triumph, therefore, no longer, over Olivia—it is unbecoming, it is ungenerous to the greatest degree. If she actually loves you, perform the promise which you made to her, a promise too sacred to be jested with; and sit down contented with the consciousness of having in some measure atoned for the numerous injuries her sex have received from the hypocrisy of your carriage to them.

L E T.

LETTER XXVII.

The Hon. Edward Astell to Lord Selwyn.

PREACH to the winds—you are a pretty fellow, indeed; what! advise me to marry the woman whom I have enjoyed? Dost thou not know, Selwyn, that the girl who will yield to one in the hour of fondness, may have the same tender fit come on her a second time—aye, a third?—No, no, Harry: the woman who has once tasted forbidden fruit will have always a devilish kind of hankering after it, or I am much mistaken. Besides, Olivia is not the pretty, gentle, tender soul, you imagine her to be: she is all fire and fury, egad.—

I told you in my last, if you remember, that I began to grow rather weary; and as
coolness

coolness is ever most conspicuous after extreme warmth, my gentlewoman soon guessed which way things were going, and upbraided me with my sudden indifference.

Knowing very well, like an experienced general, both the strength of my enemy and the situation of my ground, I bravely sustained the shock, stared her full in the face with a sort of ironical smile, and displayed my white teeth: then, turning hastily from her to the glass on her toilette, I languished a second or two in it, cursed my fellow for dressing my hair so abominably, and told her that it was no wonder she saw an alteration in me, as the dressing of my head full three inches too low, had given a confounded queerness to my features, and totally changed the expression in them.

This speech, delivered with an unmeaning impetuosity, while my eyes were still
fixed

fixed on my own dear figure, procured me the appellation of coxcomb, uttered with an emphasis not very agreeable to my ears: however, I resolved to make the most of it, and therefore, with a profound bow, said, "As you seem disposed, madam, to be out of temper with me, I cannot possibly do a better thing than take myself away, and leave you to your own reflections."

"Insulting wretch!" replied she, bursting into tears, "was it for this I left my family and friends, to have thrown myself into the arms of a man who now hates and despises me for so doing?" "Admirably performed, my dear," said I, mimicking her; "you would make an incomparable actress! What thundering storms of rage I dread, unless dispelled by soft descending showers"—concluding my bombast with a loud laugh in her face. "Is it thus, Mr. Astell, that I am

to be treated? must the humblest, the most submissive love give place to those ill-natured sarcasms which you are vain enough to think full of wit, and must all your tenderness—(a second burst of tears) give place to contempt.” “Pretty antitheses, by my soul, the wit is all on your own side; you beat me quite hollow at repartee”—

“I see, Mr. Astell, there is no talking with you; but when you are serious, if ever you are so again, you will, I believe, you *must*, allow that you have wronged me.”

“Who I? no, by all that’s tender, I am altogether of another way of thinking. *I* loved *you*, and *you* loved *me*, and so we loved till we were both tired—absolutely weary—that’s all, my dear.”

“Sir—Sir,” replied she, reddening with passion, “I won’t be used so.”

"You shall be used just as you please, madam," said I, bowing respectfully.

"Madam! Then 'tis all over."

"Surely, Miss Steel, you cannot be offended at my treating you with respect?"

"Respect! Oh Heaven, how that word stings me! had I always *respected* myself, Mr. Astell, I had not wanted any from you: from a man whom—but I will keep down my resentment, since I perceive it only excites your disdain. What other passion, indeed, ought I to expect to raise now when I am lost, ruined, sunk even below my own endurance? Yet oh, Astell! as I *have* loved you: as I still—good Heaven! can I own such a contemptible weakness?—as I still doat on the man who rends my heart asunder—spare me—pity me."

This softness, Selwyn, I protest, melted me—I am not ill-natured, you know: besides, I certainly loved the girl—I therefore ran to her; and was going to clasp her in my arms, when she flounced from me, crying, “No, Mr. Astell, every thing of that nature is over between us—I see my error—(sobbing) though too—too late: however, I will not a second time give you reason to insult me; and you may be assured I shall have strength enough, whatever it cost me, to tear you from my bosom for ever.”

Here, Selwyn, I strove to sooth her, and I swear threw out a number of pretty things, tho’ I can’t just now recollect them, I have so villanous a memory; but they had not the least effect upon her. She vowed and swore that she would leave Windfor the next morning, and never see me again.

I con-

I considered this speech, I declare, as a mere bravado, but she kept her word, ordered a post-chaise, and moved off, bag and baggage. However, that she might have no reason to reproach me, and to convince her that I had some tenderness remaining for her—upon my soul, Harry, I did love her, tho' not as I loved Lucy—I put bills for five hundred pounds into her hand: but the haughty gypsy returned them, saying, “No, Mr. Astell, I cannot be obliged to the man who has so justly merited my abhorrence and contempt. I wish, from my heart, that I had never known you; but since my past follies cannot be recalled, I will endeavour with the assistance of Heaven, who is witness to the sincerity of my repentance, to keep myself from falling into new ones: be assured, therefore, that, had I not a shilling in the world, I would not receive a farthing from you. It was not your rank or your for-

tune which tempted me to love you—were I perishing with want, nothing but the return of that love from you which constituted all my happiness, should bribe me to depend upon the man on whom I now look with all the scorn he has deserved.”

With this flourish she threw down the notes, and left me in an attitude of amazement, in which I remained for some time in a state of petrification: and while I remained in it, she got into the post-chaise she had ordered, and drove off like lightning.

I missed her at first; but when I recovered from the shock, I began to think that things were in no bad train towards a reconciliation with Lucy.—

What a cursed, confounded piece of work have you made with your girl! and
just

just at the very time when you might have, by her means, been able to give me some intelligence concerning my angel—But I have no leisure to write any more to you at present—I shall be in town to-morrow or next day, and suppose I shall meet you somewhere.



LETTER XXVIII.

Miss Musgrove to Miss Wynne.

HOW are you, my dearest Harriot? and when shall I have the pleasure of hearing from your own hand, that you are perfectly recovered?

Mrs. Mellish has been so good as to let us know that you are better; but I

want to have the contents of* her letter confirmed by yourself.

I am also impatient to hear your reasons for refusing a man so universally esteemed as lord Selwyn, and for whom you discovered every mark of approbation. When a woman refuses a man she cannot love, however deserving, nothing is to be wondered at in her conduct ; but when she rejects the man whom she really prefers to all others, while she allows that he is deserving of her, our astonishment must naturally be excited, and her conduct must appear extremely enigmatical.—Intimate as lord Selwyn is with Mr. Astell, I have not the least room to believe that they are unanimous in their sentiments with regard to women : therefore as it is now out of my

This letter is omitted, being of no immediate consequence to the story.

power

power to acquaint the latter with your motives for refusing his friend, of whom he ever spoke in the most exalted terms, and as your behaviour seems to be mysterious, my Harriot, let me be trusted with your reasons for acting thus, to all appearance, contrary both to your interest and your inclination. The request I ask is a debt due to friendship, and I believe I shall justly be offended if you withhold the payment of it to me—you well know how sincerely I love, honour, and esteem you, and therefore, cannot be surprized at my eagerness to be favoured with your own account of this mighty odd affair.

I am much afraid that some trifling, some false delicacy, has made you discourage the addresses of a man to whom you cannot help being secretly attached: when I am informed of your delicacies, my dear friend, I may, perhaps, have address enough to

H 5

make

make you look upon them in a very different light.—Pardon the vanity of this supposition, as it proceeds entirely from a desire to see you happy.

Mr. Selby is returned, with his son, and I am persecuted by the former to accept of the latter, who, I really believe, has too sincere an esteem for me to wish me to act in direct opposition to my inclination; at least he tells me so, while he sighs at not having the power to touch my heart. He behaves with so much tender respect, and so much true delicacy upon this awkward occasion, on which so much of the latter is required, that I should be glad to make both him and my friends as happy as they ought to be made by me.—But what shall I say, my amiable friend? We are not always capable of doing our duty with a good grace, and I think I should be greatly deficient in *my* duty

duty to marry a man for whom I feel nothing except esteem.—My infatuated heart here revolts against my reason—In return to this implicit confidence give me your secret thoughts without reserve, and without delay, unbosom yourself to

Your affectionate

Lucy.

LETTER XXIX.

The Hon. Edward Astell to Lord Selwyn.

Berkley Square.

HOW provokingly unlucky! just when I expected to meet you in London you are gone—nobody knows where—what do you mean by muzzing in the country when all the world is coming to town for the winter?—But thou wert ever

as unfashionable in thy motions, as thou art exemplary in thy morals, and amiable in thy manners.—I have often thought it strangely unaccountable that a man cannot be good and agreeable—pshaw: that's not my meaning neither—for thou, Selwyn, art both: I just before said so: but I designed to have said that a man can hardly be so scrupulously exact as you are in your notions about honour, as you call it, &c. and at the same time so easy, so assured, so degagée as I am.—But I will not make comparisons: they are always odious, most frequently unjust: however, such fellows as myself generally are successful with the women.—To prove my assertion: I have been in town but three days, and I have made a conquest already, to borrow a phrase from the lady's vocabulary. — She is a lovely creature, I swear: such a pair of eyes! they absolutely dazzle mine to look at them. But I will tell you.—

I came

I came to town, you must know, fatigued and unfit for company, so went incog. to the play. The green-boxes are the only places upon these occasions; one can be in them quite at one's ease.—While I was lolling indolently, and displaying my person at full length upon the benches, two females, whom I had not yet had leisure to observe, turned about at my making some bustle, and one of them discovered the sweetest face—Lucy Musgrove's excepted,—I ever saw.

I soon entered into chat with them.—you know my familiar manner—and found them both conversible: the prettier of the two susceptible enough. I would have waited on them home, but my *beauty* opposed my offer so strenuously, that there is, I suppose, some jealous-pated monster in the way: some old Argus, I'll lay my life.—However, I have appointed to meet
 them

them in a night or two at the same place. I'm sure I've done some execution, for the latter drew back her hand at parting with reluctance. When once you get fast hold of a woman's fingers, Harry, you are in a fair way to her heart: but you are such an ignoramus: you know nothing of these things.—Poor Harry—I have just discovered, by the means of your fellow, that you are at Bath; London, I suppose, is not to be borne now—Harriot is unkind—Poor Harry again.—If you had only staid, child, till I came to you, I should have given you a lesson, by which you might have gained the finest woman in town by this time.

L E T T

LETTER XXX.

Lord Selwyn to the Hon. Edward Astell.

YOU insolent, conceited, empty boaster! how dare *you*, Astell, of all men, to pretend to reign with such despotic power among the women, after having been so gloriously, so fairly flung, by the most lovely, the most deserving of her sex? You cannot triumph till you have conquered Lucy Musgrove. Know, Astell, I laugh, yes, I laugh at your presumption; and since neither reason nor persuasion can make you good for any thing, I absolutely, to make use of one of your own expressions, pity you, for being such an abandoned coxcomb: nay, you grow worse, you are become a downright libertine. Till now I
only

only looked upon you as a meer flirt, (a very despicable character by the way) but you continue to act in so criminal a manner, you will be in a little while a disgrace to society, and I shall be ashamed to have any connection with a wretch beneath even my contempt.—Severe, however, as I am, Astell, I feel for you as a friend: I pity you, and as a friend to mankind wish to see you in a better train of thinking. For what short-lived, unsubstantial pleasures, (your present pursuits cannot afford any others) do you give up sense and virtue, reason and honour? What lasting satisfactions can possibly arise from a voluptuous intercourse with a variety of women “loveless and unendeared?” One hour of elegant sentimental conversation with such a woman as Lucy Musgrove, yields more sincere delight than a whole seraglio of beauties can give by the display of their personal charms alone, without feeling the

light-

lightest affection for him to whom they are prostituted. We can receive no true pleasure except our hearts are touched, and that Lucy has touched your heart I firmly believe—Besides, Astell, have you no compassion for the poor creatures whom you daily deceive by your flattery? have you never reflected that by seducing the inclinations of a woman whom you cannot esteem in return, you are as criminal as a highwayman, and as cruel as a murderer. The sports of the libertine afford a barbarous enjoyment, because it must arise from the misery of the object from whom it springs.—Consider therefore before it is too late, and endeavour to make some reparation for the numberless follies and vices of which you have been guilty: but I would not have you think of ever regaining the affections of Miss Musgrove; she is so infinitely superior to you, that you must not attempt now to make any pretensions to her.

L E T-



L E T T E R XXXI.

The Hon. Edward Astell to Lord Selwyn.

I REALLY wonder at my own calmness: I really wonder how I can have patience to correspond with a man who takes such shocking liberties with me: yet when I consider that the man who takes such liberties is my sincerest friend, all reproaches are hushed, and I feel that I must esteem him for his corrections, tho' at the same time I smart under the keenness of them. — I hate myself, absolutely, Selwyn, by comparison: had you more failings, I should love you better, because I should revere you less; but you are, as you say of Lucy, so infinitely superior to me—Oh! how I love to hear her thus spoken of, thus praised!

ed!—dearest adorable creature! never, never shall I see thy equal!—But away with this whining; it lessens me in my own opinion, and lowers me confoundedly in yours—let me proceed with my narrative—Say what you will to me, Harry, you have such an absolute ascendant over me, that I cannot open my heart to any man breathing but you.—Well then—

My fair creature, whom I fell in with at the play, happens to be married, and to a man who is fond of her; yet the pretty little devil would, I am sure, give him up for me; but I am not the wicked fellow, Selwyn, you take me to be. My conscience forbids me to separate wives from their husbands—because those husbands may make reprisals by and bye. 'Tis a sweet pretty creature, however, I swear: she sighs and looks so full of love, and while she begs me to spare her, grasps my hand so tenderly,

tenderly, that had not fortune thrown another bewitching female in my way, I would not answer for myself against so powerful a temptation.

Being willing to exhibit myself to my charming conquest in all my glory, I dressed in the very highest style, and went to the opera, where I knew she was to be. We met, and while we were totally engaged with each other, who should come into the stage-box but lady Barbara L—, that lovely, languishing, blooming widow?

She singled me out in a moment. I was, certainly, *sout à fait achevée*—My hair, ay, and my whole figure, was an *au dernier gout*.—Now, I know fellows of your ferious and sentimental turn sneer at what you call the parade of appearance; but, by my soul, Harry, you would give half your fortune

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fortune to look only half as well—and so as you cannot come up to us, you think you must laugh to keep each other in countenance.—Poor rascals!—but to the point.

Lady Bab, I say, fixed upon me for the night, and ogled me like any devil—I returned her *yeux doux* most cordially, while the dear charmer by my side hung upon me with so much jealous fondness, that I was perfectly puzzled between them: honour, however—you see, Selwyn, that I had not entirely shaken off that ennobling passion—honour, I say, Harry, would not permit me any longer to pursue a married woman, as I could not pursue her with impunity; so I began immediately to get rid of my *wife*, in order to fly with the utmost rapidity into the arms of my *widow*.

Lord Aimwell was with her—my best friend next to thyself. I saw the way, therefore,

fore, clear before me: yet I could not handsomely quit Mrs. Beal till the entertainment was over; nor appear, at least, in the box with lady Bab, while she was in the *house*; and out of it she certainly had not the slightest desire to remove. I made continual complaints of the crowd and the heat. In short, I had ten thousand fidgets, and would have given a joint of my finger to have got from this love-sick thing, whom, but a few days before, I was half mad to get at; so variable is man!

Perceiving that the more impatient I grew, the more quiet *she* sat, I e'en resolved to turn the tables upon her, and to try the strength of my impudence. I became ridiculously fond, as we were in a public place: I lolled on her shoulder, nay once, absolutely kissed her, while I affected to whisper behind her fan.

Shocked

Shocked at so gross an impropriety, she started, in spite of all her *tendresse* for me, drew up a little, and began to be less familiar, that she might make me keep a decent distance.

It was *my* part, you know, to be piqued at this assumed indifference: I accordingly pouted exceedingly.

The opera was over. My widow still watched my motions, and remained in her box. Determined to be with her in a moment, I seized Mrs. Beal's hand, and offered to hurry her out.

She drew back, and, with a look of serious disapprobation, told me, that her coach was not come up, and that there was no occasion to be in such haste.

Distracted at this most unseasonable delay, I began to grow quite angry, and re-

solved to make a downright quarrel, since I found that nothing else would do. I therefore told her, that I had not believed her to be of so capricious a disposition; but that since I was now certain she only meant to trifle with me, she could not be surprized if I left her to act just as she thought proper; and so, without staying to hear her reply, flew to lady Bab's box, whose bright eyes grew more dazzling at my approach.—I made Aimwell introduce me to her directly.

She received me with all the familiarity of a long acquaintance.

Just as I was in the height of my foolery with her, I accidentally turned my head towards that part of the house in which I had left Mrs. Beal, and saw her fainting in the arms of a female friend who accompanied her.

To

To confess the truth, I could not help beholding the disorder which I verily thought I had myself occasioned, without some compassion: yet I had the cruelty, I *must* call my behaviour cruel, to join in the laugh with lady Bab, when she said, "See, see, Mr. Astell, the lady with whom you have been all this evening is in fits."—The lovely cunning gypsy felt her consequence, and was willing to make the most of it.

I *should* have gone, however, to Mrs. Beal's assistance, Selwyn: I was wrong; yet I swear, I did not well know how to manage matters, without risking the loss of one of them: but I believe, as I have *finessed*, I shall, after all, keep them both. We are sometimes horribly embarrassed upon these occasions. I have been more than once unfortunate enough to be too agreeable. Don't you laugh at my egregious

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gious vanity? I know you do; but no matter.— You would give half your estate to be but a quæster so well with the women as I am. However, right or wrong, I staid where I was, had the happiness to lead lady Barbara to her chair, and to be invited to breakfast with her the next morning.

I went, and had a most delicious *tête-à-tête* in her apartment: after having spent near four hours with her, we both adjourned to our toilettes, in order to make ourselves fit to be visible in the evening. I promised to sup where I had breakfasted: but——

While I was at Mrs. Commode's rout, a letter, brought to my house by a chairman, was delivered to me by my servant. It contained the following lines:

“The insolent cruelty of your behaviour last night, has been of the utmost

service to me; since it has saved me from being guilty of a weakness, that, I am certain (had it been possible for you to remain constant) I must have for ever deplored; as having a heart not destitute of sensibility, I should have severely reproached myself for having deviated from the duties of my situation. I thank Heaven, therefore, that with the thousand amiable qualities which gain you so many admirers, you have one also belonging to you, which renders you as certainly contemptible in a very short time. I should not have honoured you with any farther notice, were I not apprehensive that you might misconstrue my fainting to the power you had over me: that apprehension got the better of my present disgust; but know, Sir, to your disappointment, that the loss of you gave me no disturbance: it was the anguish I felt at having so nearly rendered myself for ever wretched by my own folly, which

overwhelmed me: I was not in the least troubled at your desertion; I only sunk under the shame of having appeared so madly necessary to my own ruin; but I am, with grateful acknowledgments to you, safe, and feel myself quite happy in having had so narrow an escape, and in knowing that I can, from this hour, trust myself with a greater coxcomb than Mr. Astell— if a greater can be found, without the most distant apprehensions of any danger.

Did you ever hear such a devil? But she is confoundedly let down by my leaving her for lady Bab; and if I don't make her more fond of me than ever, then say I know nothing of the matter indeed.

L E T-

LETTER XXXII.

Miss Wynne to Miss Musgrove.

YOU are so very pressing, my dear Lucy, and insist upon having secret for secret, so strenuously, that I scarce know how to refuse you: tho' if what I am now going to write should be discovered, it will so much increase my present unhappiness, that I am almost afraid to venture the communication of it: not that I have any doubts concerning *your* discretion; I am sure I can depend upon you: and as you very justly observe, there is no danger, at present, of lord Selwyn's being informed of it, because you have no longer any connections with his friend.—However, I would postpone this desired information,

had I any hopes of seeing you; but the sister of Mrs. Mellish, Mrs. Grant, is come from Ireland, and in so bad a state of health, that the Bath waters have been recommended to her. My aunt, therefore, is preparing to attend her to Bath, and with the greater satisfaction, as she fancies that a new place, with new objects, may remove the dejection under which I have, for some time, laboured; and of which—but I must again intreat you to make no mention of it, not even to your own excellent father and mother, especially to my aunt—this is the cause: to tell you that I have the highest esteem, nay affection, for lord Selwyn, would be only to repeat what you have already guessed at by my letters relating to him; but to tell you that for those very reasons I have refused the honour he would have done me, may possibly surprize you, yet it is true. From my increasing intimacy with him, and particularly

cularly from what he in confidence related to Mr. Astell, I am certain that he liked me well enough to marry me; but as he has always believed, that I had, from my first acquaintance with him, a mean design upon his fortune, my acceptance of his offers would undoubtedly confirm the injurious belief: I therefore, resolved, whatever I suffered upon the occasion, to refuse peremptorily what, at the same time, would have made me compleatly happy in this world. I dare not trust my good aunt with the motives by which I am actuated, lest she may, from her extreme affection for me, and from a strong desire to see me so well married, be prompted to give up a larger share of her fortune to me than she ought, I know, to part with in her life time. These, my Lucy, are the only reasons which have induced me to act with such apparent inconsistency; and I am too well assured that the rectitude of your own

Heart will not permit you to condemn me. You may, indeed, ask me why I encouraged lord Selwyn's inclination for me, if I meant not to gratify it? But I declare solemnly, that I did not, at first, imagine he thought I had any design upon him; and for my farther excuse, let me add an assertion to which you will, I dare say, subscribe, that when once a man becomes very agreeable to us, we are not immediately apt to apprehend the worst consequences. You will also, perhaps, tell me, in the warmth of your friendship for me, that had I married my lord, the sincerity of my affection would have soon convinced him that tenderness for himself, exclusive of his rank and fortune, was my only motive for becoming his wife; but men, even the best, my dear, are not always to be convinced: they have their prejudices, as well as we; and what wretchedness superior to that which I at present feel, must I have endured,

H. W. M.
J. E. T.

endured, had lord Selwyn still supposed me to have acted meerly from interested views? And had I ever had courage to declare my true reason for refusing him, might he not have despised me in his heart? And might not such a declaration have strengthened the suspicions he had before entertained about my intentions to impose upon him? No, my friend, I cannot bear to be suspected of deceiving the man I love. Let me lose him for ever, but let him still have no reason to disesteem me. I have written so much, at your request indeed, about myself, that I have hardly room to add any thing more than my real regret at not being able to see you, and repeated injunctions with regard to secrecy, inviolable secrecy: remember these words, my dear Lucy, and believe me to remain

Most sincerely, most affectionately,

Your's,

H. Wynne.

L E T T E R XXXIII.

Lord Selwyn to the Hon. Edward Aftell.

Bath—

POSITIVELY, Aftell, I would break off a correspondence that gives me so little pleasure, from its exhibiting you in the most disagreeable lights in which the man whom I wish to call my friend can be placed, were not *you* alone acquainted with all the turnings and windings of my heart, with regard to Miss Wynne, of whom I find so urgent a necessity to say something, that I must either write or die.

Would you believe it, Aftell?— She is come hither: she is now in this city, attending

tending a sick relation of her aunt's—but what a change is there in her whole person! She *was* a fine, lively, blooming brunette; she *is* now pale, emaciated, and dejected beyond expression: yet, never was she, I think, half so agreeable. She knew not, I am verily persuaded, of my being here, as she appeared excessively confused at our first meeting in the pump-room, alternately looking pale and red, red and pale, till I expected to see her lifeless at my feet, fearful all the while to accost her, lest I should add to the emotions which the sight of me occasioned: but she is now so reconciled to me that we converse with freedom upon all sorts of subjects—the *one* excepted, which I most want to enter upon. The familiarity which this place allows, and which, indeed, cannot well be avoided, has thus brought us together; and were I as vain as you, Ned, I should swear that Harriot was altogether happy in having me perpetually

near her: certain it is, however, that she is much more cheerful than when she first came here: her countenance is extremely cleared up, and she seizes with eagerness every opportunity to converse with me, seeming to observe with unusual delight my assiduous endeavours to entertain her.

But, to confess the truth, this unexpected rencontre, together with the pleasure, not to say rapture, which she apparently feels at the sight of me, has so increased my inclination for her, that if she intends not to be kinder than she has yet been, I shall be more disappointed than ever.

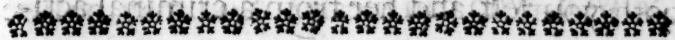
She has gained a serious admirer since her arrival here, a man of wit and fortune; but tho' she never encouraged him in public, by paying him any particular civilities, nor admitted him, I believe, to private visits, he made her an offer which few women would have slighted, and was imme-

diately rejected: she rejected him too with a satisfaction which evidently shewed she was pleased to have it in her power to let me see that he was not preferred to me. How my heart thanked her for this consideration! I even ventured to hint the pleasure her behaviour gave me; but she only replied with a sigh, appearing, however, at the same time, with such additional charms, that I ardently longed to devour the lips thro' which she breathed it. As we were by ourselves, at that moment, I *did* seize her hand with transport unutterable, and printed a thousand kisses on it, before she could take it from me: but as she blushed exceedingly, and seemed to be disconcerted at this freedom, I checked my raptures, tho' I did great violence to my inclination by correcting them. What can be the meaning of this unaccountable conduct? I wish it could be explained. But I have said enough of my affairs.

You

You are a sad fellow, Astell—however, if you have the least tincture of virtue remaining, think no more of Mrs. Beal; whether her note is dictated by jealousy or repentance, leave her: she has given you an admirable opportunity to do so; take advantage of it, therefore, and save both yourself and her from a criminal action, at which a man of the smallest reflection, and of the least honour, would shudder. There are women enough ready to satisfy all your loose desires: you are under no necessity of violating both human and divine laws, for the gratification of them. Think only, for a moment, how you would feel if your wife's character was blasted, and her affections alienated; and stop ere it is too late—attempt not by destroying the harmony of their domestic lives, to render two people wretched, who, undisturbed by you, may spend their days perfectly satisfied with each other; nor boast of your per-

personal accomplishments, while you make so vile, so contemptible a use of them. You are really no longer deserving of any favour; and were Lucy at this time to relent, I myself would tell her that you are not worth her slightest notice.



LETTER XXXIV.

Miss Wynne to Miss Mulgrove.

HOW strangely things happen! When I went to Bath with so much reluctance, little did I think of meeting lord Selwyn there. Shall I confess to you, my dear, that the renewal of our acquaintance has been such a cordial to my spirits, that I forget my illness and every thing else?—How sensible, how tender, how amiable he is! I see, with transport, that I still reign unrivalled

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rivalled in his heart, and have no joy but in pleasing him; yet I cannot expect this joy to last. 'Tis true, I know not how long I may stay here, but I may reasonably imagine that he will soon leave us.

I have got another lover; but after Lord Selwyn, who can please! You may be sure I cannot listen to any body except him on whom my heart is fixed. He seemed to be transported at my keeping myself disengaged, and discovered his satisfaction in a manner which touched me excessively. — Oh! my Lucy! would I were with you!

— Yet I do not wish to leave Bath while Lord Selwyn continues at it. —

I am sorry, methinks, that you cannot like Selby, because you speak of him as of a man who merits your regard; but our passions are not always to be controuled: inclination will sometimes conquer reason, tho' the latter ought to prevail.

We have talked much of Astell; lord Selwyn is his real friend; he wishes to cure him of his foibles, and to make him like himself; every thing that's good and amiable; and I wish, for your sake, that he may succeed.

I expect to hear from you.—I know you will keep my secret.

LETTER XXXV.

Miss Mulgrove to Miss Wynne.

I HAVE kept your secret; but I am half angry with you for having so foolish a one to trust me with. Forgive me, Harriot; but you may marry a man of lord Selwyn's excellent character without any alarming apprehensions. Believe me, he will not venture on a woman who merits not

not his confidence. Your sentiments, I allow, are noble, uncommonly so; but were he certain of the sincerity of your affection, he would soon be convinced of the value of such a heart as yours. In my opinion you give unnecessary pain both to him and to yourself. Possibly, you may, in your turn, disapprove of my behaviour to Selby; yet I cannot love him—I have tried, Harriot, — tried to no purpose. He is, however, so attentive, so very assiduous to please, that he has deservedly a great share of my compassion. He is certainly good: why is he not also agreeable? What a pity that goodness and agreeableness should ever be parted!

My father is quite laid up with the gout, and therefore, as I have so little time for writing, you must make allowances for me, and not spare your own pen.

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LETTER XXXVI.

The Hon. Edward Astell to Lord Selwyn.

YOUR last deserves not an answer: that part of it, I mean, which relates only to me; and if I could, any way, help feeling the affection for you which has, I know not how, absolutely bewitched me, ever since I knew you, I would throw you from me, as a poor spiritless creature, dead to all the delicious joys of love. But I do love thee, Selwyn, positively love thee, or else—Come, confess, however, that you have quite lost *your* girl by that cool indifference, and that tame ridiculous compliance with her idle caprice.—She may refuse you, but, take my word for it, she loves you all the while to madness: now, let

let me see any woman, in such a situation, Lucy Musgrove alone excepted, refuse me. — I wish you could see how I manage lady Barbara — I have taken possession not only of the woman herself, but of every thing belonging to her. She is a fine creature, upon my soul, and so passionately fond, that let me die if I can tell how to get rid of her, or make her sensible of the propriety of keeping a becoming distance in public. When women are once thoroughly in love, there is no shaking them off: they actually grow immensely troublesome. — Why now, I really might as well be married to her, for she does so hang upon me — — “Where are you going, Astell?” — “If I happen to leave her for a moment —” “Well, but you won’t stay? nay, you shan’t.” — Then in a softer voice, “You know I can’t live without you: I insist upon your going with me to Soho to-night.” — By all that’s tender, these

would

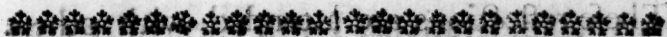
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amorous women are ten times worse than wives, because they keep no measures at all, either in public or private: only the devil of it is, when once married there is no getting free but by death, or else I don't know a more desirable girl for a constant companion than Lucy Musgrove; she is so delicately tender, and possessed of a modest timidity that will always prevent her from taking any of those odious familiarities which blunt the edge of appetite even in the moment of rapture. — Never, no never, should I be weary of a woman whose conversation was equal to her beauty, who was capable of increasing her powers of alluring by a perpetual and enchanting variety — But why do I think of her whom I have offended beyond all reparation! — Yet — if she knew my heart — if she knew how sincerely I regret the loss of her esteem, and how willingly, how very willingly, I would make any kind of submission required of me — You know

know not, Harry, what I feel when I reflect on the virtues of this excellent girl, and on my own egregious follies—— These reflections are attended with others of a more serious nature : I never think of Lucy without finding myself the better for it.—Could she but forgive me, I should, certainly become a new creature—But I must get out of these horrible vapours, or I shall be fit for nothing. I shall grow to hate my very existence.

A-propos, your girl, as I said before, loves you, ay, loves you tenderly: there must be some secret cause of her affected indifference to marriage which you have not yet discovered; some prior attachment, from which she cannot disengage herself, which prevents her from accepting of your generous offers, and which gives her a great deal of uneasiness. Were I in your place I would soon

soon find it out.—I believe I shall come down to Bath.



LETTER XXXVII.

Miss Wynne to Miss Musgrove.

I AM now more unhappy than ever, infinitely more wretched than I expected to be.

Lord Selwyn talks of leaving Bath. I could not hide my concern when he mentioned his intended departure to me. He saw my distress, and so far took advantage of it as to repeat his wishes that I would no longer refuse him; but had I accepted of him then, my distress would have appeared meerly artificial—No, Lucy, I love with too much delicacy to marry him

him while my disinterestedness must be doubtful. The moment I can satisfy him that I love him, exclusive of all mercenary considerations, I will cheerfully consent to be his: but as I am not in a way to give him that satisfaction, I cannot be free from anxiety. I blessed the hour in which I came hither—(and I am likely to remain here) as soon as I saw my lord; but now, on his talking of a removal from hence, my heart sinks with sorrow and despair. I cannot write any more at present—Such a short letter, indeed, is hardly worth your perusal; but pray, my dear Lucy, attribute the shortness of it entirely to the disturbance of my mind. I sincerely wish Mr. Musgrove better—wish myself better—wish you better.

H. W.

P. S. Mr. Astell still loves you, as Lord Selwyn tells me, with unabated ardor.

L. E. T.

LETTER XXXVIII.

Lord Selwyn to the Hon. Edward Astell.

YOU shan't come hither—don't think of it—though I am going to quit a place which only renders me still more unhappy. If I am never to have Harriot, it will be much wiser to leave her, as she certainly grows more and more upon me every hour. She assures me, indeed, that she is resolved not to marry; but by that assurance forbids me to think of her. In order to comply with her injunctions, I am determined to set out for my uncle's to-morrow.

W. H.

Your disapprobation of Lady Bath's conduct, gives me some hopes of you.

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but tell me, does not your disquiet proceed from mere satiety, or from the sight of a new object? I well know your insufferable vanity, yet am pleased to find that you still prefer Lucy.

I am interrupted, but will finish my letter before I go.

In continuation.

I am just come from bidding Harriot adieu; the parting-scene has affected me beyond expression. I had in my own mind resolved not to take a formal leave of her; for upon my mentioning my intention to go into Cheshire, she discovered such emotions, that I, a second time, endeavoured to persuade her to be mine, to no purpose: I thought, therefore, to steal away unnoticed, as the continual sight of, and increasing inclination, for a
woman

woman whose heart I cannot gain, only doubles my uneasiness, and as absence might perhaps work a cure; but we met at the rooms: she looked so pale, so overwhelmed with dejection, that I could not help wishing to enliven her, and strove to prove successful by a number of attentions which a tender passion can alone dictate; but strove in vain, as I spoke at the same time of my departure.

When the hour of leaving the rooms drew near, she rose to go. Mrs. Mellish, who was at one of the quadrille-tables, desired her to send the chair back.

I led her to the door; just as she was stepping into the chair she pressed my hand and fainted.

I was going, in my first surprize, to call for help; but as I had caught her in my

arms I saw her recovering, therefore, seated her carefully in the chair, and walked by her side to Mrs. Mellish's lodgings. When we arrived I carried her into the parlour, and bad the maid bring some drops, which she took, and thanking me for the care of her, leaned her head upon her hand, and gave herself up to melancholy, which touched me very sensibly. My uneasiness was increased, because I knew not what methods to make use of for her relief.

We continued some time in this embarrassing situation. At last, finding that nothing which I said seemed to render her more chearful, and enduring myself no small anxiety, I determined to go from her, though I had scarce resolution sufficient to bid her farewell. However, fancying that we might be both better asunder, I ventured, and advanced, uncertain whether I was right or wrong, or whether she expected

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pected such a motion, to salute her—I felt her face wet with tears; but as she made no resistance, I actually kissed her, tenderly; and by so doing so warmed my heart, I question if I *could* have left her, had not the door opened and discovered Mrs. Mellish. I then tore myself from her, while she, with a second pressure of my hand, and in a voice hardly intelligible, sighed out, “God bless you wherever you go.”

I went, indeed, because I could not hold it any longer; for if I had staid, I should certainly have whimpered like a baby. I hurried home, threw myself into my chair in which I am now writing. I shall be at Ansecomb’s to-morrow, and shall be very glad to receive a letter from you there.

 L E T T E R XXXIX.

The Hon. Edward Astell to Lord Selwyn.

I HAVE seen her, heard her—almost touched her—the dear amiable girl, the for-ever determined mistress of my heart—Oh Selwyn! would you were here!—Yet I should not have breath to tell you: nor will my fingers keep pace with my eager wishes to inform you of my feelings.

Yesterday lady Bab made me promise to be at the play with her. I hate going in form with women, there is always such a fuss with them: they take all the attention to themselves, and no body else is minded—So I told her I would meet her.

Now,

Now, you must know, I always love to break into the house in the very middle of the first act: by which *manœuvre* I draw the eyes of all the women upon me in an instant; and faith I have done more execution that way than by any other I can name—Accordingly, dressed *au dernier goût*, and absolutely, in my own humble opinion, irresistible, I darted into the side-box.

My dear Bab, who expected me every moment, by the bustle which she made to accommodate me with a place, entirely disturbed every creature within some yards of her; and by so doing effectually fixed all eyes upon me, while I threw myself into the properest attitude to exhibit my person, and to display the elegancies of my dress to the utmost advantage. I was, you will readily imagine, acting a part for which nature has eminently qualified

me—I was certainly the compleat coxcomb.

Glancing my eyes negligently over the women, to see what mischief I might do—Heavens! they settled upon Lucy Mufgrove, who was within a box or two of that in which I was going to seat myself—I cannot possibly describe the confusion, the remorse, the tenderness, the transport which I felt at so unexpected a sight—My arms dropped almost lifeless by my side, and I became, instead of a gay, high-spirited fellow, full of fire and vivacity, the tamest, the most helpless inanimate creature breathing. Never, never, did I feel myself so totally let down.—I stood altogether like a stupid Cymon, gaping at the charming cause of my embarrassment—and—foolish puppy as I was—incapable of taking any step to recover my spirits. I must, undoubtedly, have

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appeared in the aukwardest light imaginable to the whole house, gazing away my very soul.

The amiable creature, shocked, no doubt, at what she took for an intrepid assurance, tho' it was really nothing but a *melange* of rapturous emotions which I never felt before, blushed excessively; and her blushes made a considerable addition to her natural beauties.

The consciousness of having given so much disquietude to this adorable girl, restored me to myself: I actually believe, Selwyn, that I also blushed in return for my folly—I endeavoured to atone in some measure for my impertinent carriage by a respectful bow, but it was answered with an indifference which stabbed me to the heart: her father, and her excellent mother, also treated me in the same chilling man-

ner; and their combined coldness disconcerted me so much, that from a very distinguished figure, I became of no sort of consequence in my own eyes: I was, indeed, both ashamed of, and confounded at, my insignificancy. I know not whether I should have recovered myself, had not Lady Barbary, who saw how things went—(these wanton women, Harry, are as jealous as a thousand devils)—rallied me in such a manner as to put me again into the possession of my senses; tho' I repossessed them only to see more clearly the wide difference between my two charmers: but, gracious Heaven, how infinitely superior, not only to Bab, but to every other woman, was this divine Lucy! What an animated complexion had she! what a noble dignity! what amiable simplicity at the same time appeared in her lovely face, and what a delicious languor in her beauteous eyes! what a bewitching modesty in her whole

ex-

expressive countenance! and what enchanting grace in ever motion! Oh! Harry, Harry, what an angel have I lost!—Yet I was charmed, intoxicated, to see her thus brought before me adorned with a thousand new *agremens*. I again ventured to look on her; lost in transporting pleasure, I forgot that I had forfeited her esteem; I forgot—surprizing you will say, *myself*, the place where, and the person with whom I was; and leaning my head on my hand, which rested on the box, gave myself up entirely to the rapture of gazing on her sweet face.

Lady Bab, enraged, spoke to me, and laughed aloud to wake me from my *reverie*, pulled me by the sleeve, pushed me—all to no purpose.—I was as immovable as a statue, and kept my post till the curtain dropped.—Then, instead of offering my assistance to the women around me, thrust

myself rudely by them, almost overset Lady Barbara, who was rendered defenceless thro' anger and astonishment, and flew to the door of the box which held Lucy and her family. I was just ready to rush in, and seize her hand, but a moment's recollection made me dread giving any new offence: I therefore waited their coming out with all the eagerness of impatient love.

At last their coach was announced. Mr. and Mrs. Musgrove, the former taking care of a lady, the latter conducted by a gentleman, passed me, followed by that Selby I have already mentioned to you, leading Lucy: having attended closely to *her*, I had overlooked *him*; but felt my heart swell with fury at seeing him encouraged to be with her upon such terms: for he spoke to her with a smile of tender respect, and she replied with the utmost good hu-

mour

mour and complacency. I heard her sweet harmonious voice, and, tho' what she said was of no consequence, as the meekest nothing, uttered with a certain tone and manner, touched the heart of a favoured lover with a peculiar force. I would have sacrificed all the women I ever knew, nay every *she* upon earth, to have been so distinguished.

I followed close, and saw him put her into the coach, but did not get in after her, as there were already five of them: before the carriage moved, however, he hung upon the door, while she spoke to him with so obliging a familiarity, that it went to my heart.

I stood absorbed in thought till the coach was out of sight, and then returned to lady Bab; but spiritless, chagrined, disconcerted, and totally out of humour: and her ladyship's

myself rudely by them, almost overset Lady Barbara, who was rendered defenceless thro' anger and astonishment, and flew to the door of the box which held Lucy and her family. I was just ready to rush in, and seize her hand, but a moment's recollection made me dread giving any new offence: I therefore waited their coming out with all the eagerness of impatient love.

At last their coach was announced. Mr. and Mrs. Musgrove, the former taking care of a lady, the latter conducted by a gentleman, passed me, followed by that Selby I have already mentioned to you, leading Lucy: having attended closely to *her*, I had overlooked *him*; but felt my heart swell with fury at seeing him encouraged to be with her upon such terms: for he spoke to her with a smile of tender respect, and she replied with the utmost good hu-

mour

mour and complacency. I heard her sweet harmonious voice, and, tho' what she said was of no consequence, as the meekest nothing, uttered with a certain tone and manner, touched the heart of a favoured lover with a peculiar force. I would have sacrificed all the women I ever knew, nay every *she* upon earth, to have been so distinguished.

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I stood absorbed in thought till the coach was out of sight, and then returned to lady Bab; but spiritless, chagrined, disconcerted, and totally out of humour: and her ladyship's

ship's looks very soon convinced me, as well as my own feelings, that a *tête-à-tête* would not be the most desirable thing in the world; and, indeed, I offered my hand to her with a carelessness, which was sufficient to furnish her with violent suspicions about my constancy, if she had encouraged none before. She looked, consequently, very much piqued, and drawing back, said, reddening, "No Sir, pray follow the lady who engrossed your attention this evening."

"That is not in my power at present, madam," said I, with all that insolent self-sufficiency so natural in a fine young fellow to a woman of whom he begins to be tired.

"Oh! well then," replied she, "I am engaged to-night: I shall not throw myself any longer in the way of a man who only comes

comes to me when he is pursuing nobody else." I took her at her word, sincerely thanked her in my heart for so seasonable a dismissal, and with a bow, which expressed more than I chose to say, in a public place, stepped into my chair.

When I had been at home about three quarters of an hour, the following note was brought to me by her servant.

"Tho' you have rendered yourself unworthy of my least notice by your ridiculous behaviour to-night, yet you know but too well your power over me: let me see you, therefore, immediately; for upon reflection, it is utterly impossible for you long to prefer that meer country girl to

B-E-L-L-E

I had

I had no stomach at all to this summons: knowing, however, that a refusal would be construed into a downright declaration of war, and chusing, for many reasons, to break off all connections with her as quietly as I could, I went to her, and found her alone, in all the horrors of a *solitaire*, stretched on her sofa, angry, fatigued, and gasping for breath, to give vent to the different sensations which seemed to convulse her bosom at my approach.

I was, to be sure, rather impertinent; for tho' I saw very clearly that she expected some submissive and tender excuses for my late neglect, I determined to make her sensible that she was mistaken in me, and that I had done *her* a favour in coming. But there is always such a confounded obstinacy in the sex—they never will be convinced of their errors, till they are totally

de-

deserted—So I kept a very respectful and consequently, provoking distance.

“What do you mean, Astell,” cried she, swelling with resentment and disappointed love, “by this unaccountable reserve?—but you are so intoxicated with vanity——”

“Who I, lady Bab?” replied I, looking carelessly about the room, and playing with her bracelet, which she had taken off and laid on the table, (which, by the way, contained my picture set in brilliants)—“who I? upon my soul I was only listening in silent deference to what you were saying, to prove the profoundness of my obedience to your commands.”

“Deference! obedience! commands! Heavens!” exclaimed she, with a look and voice strongly expressive of the rage with which

which her breast was inflamed, "what an insult upon my fondness! but you are"—

"What, madam," said I, adjusting a curl in the glass.—

"A villain, Astell," replied she, "and you know you are one."—

"Not I, positively, Madam," answered I; "but I am exactly what your ladyship pleases to think me"—(smiling.)

"Abandoned wretch," replied she, in a foam—then melting into the most languishing softness, added, "What have I done to deserve this insolence? Cruel Astell! you well know how I doat on you, in spite of your coolness: how I die for a return of love, as warm, as sincere as my own!"

"Your ladyship is so extremely condescending," said I, "that, may I perish

if I know how to disengage myself from an affair which really begins so little to want an *eclaircissement* — that ———”

“Monster,” interrupted she, “tho’ more beautiful than Adonis in thy outward form, thou hast a mind as distorted as thy person is lovely — heart thou hast none. — Oh! why, why had I ever one to bestow on such a cool, ungrateful devil.”

I bowed — I sighed — and my sighs were, I protest, not affected; for the remembrance of my all-charming Lucy forced them from my overcharged bosom. — They operated so powerfully on her ladyship, that she sunk upon the sofa with the tenderest languishment of desire. But I had no passion left for her; my whole soul was engrossed by that adorable angel.

“Your ladyship is so extremely con-
descending,” said I, “that may I per-
mit me to say, that I am exactly what you have just called me.”

Oh Selwyn! how I lament my past follies! what would I give to recall the—— but to proceed——

Lady Bab, finding me not so ready to play the lover as she expected, and believing that her reproaches prevented my advances to her, strove, by a thousand wanton blandishments, to awaken desire, pretending that she had been too hasty; and that all faithless as I was, I was also too lovely to be given up; and calling me her dear, her charming inconstant Astell.

It is true, faith, Harry! but it was too late—all was over with her. I looked all that I did not chuse to say, and feigning a violent head-ach (tho' the pain lay entirely in my heart) brushed out of the house, leaving her to her women and her hysterics.—Poor Bab! I pity thee, let me die, if I don't. But I begin, Selwyn, to

be

be curfedly tired of fuch women as thefe — they are by no means the people to whom one would wifh to be united. Could I only perfuade that heavenly girl to forgive what is paff, and take me to her arms, I fhould, as I have faid before, be quite another creature. I am fure, however, that I can never love any other woman,

and that all faithful as I was, I was alfo
LETTER XL.

her dear, her charming inconstant Affell.
 Mifs Mufgrove to Mifs Wynne.

It is true, I am in a hurry, but it was too
 London.

YOU will be, no doubt, extremely furprized, my dear friend, to fee my letter dated from the metropolis: I am equally furprized to find myfelf here; but my aunt Crawford, who was not expected to arrive from the Eaft-Indies till next year,

year, came by the last ship. You have heard my father speak of this relation: she is almost twenty years younger than him, a lively, agreeable widow, seemingly fond of what is called pleasure: but tho' not a lover of the country at any time, her affairs, at present, would not suffer her conveniently to go down to Woodcot; and my father always had so great an affection for this sister, that, notwithstanding his gout, and his dislike to London (he is, however, much better) he brought us to town in a hurry.

My time is so much taken up with going about from place to place with Mrs. Crawford, that I have just now very little leisure for writing; otherwise, I think I could find arguments sufficient to confute yours, with regard to your dread of being deemed interested. Yet I must, nevertheless, allow, that as you discover so much greatness of mind,

mind, and so sincere an esteem and affection for lord Selwyn, if he cannot be rendered as thoroughly sensible as I am of your true reasons for refusing him——But I will not advise—the point is too delicate to be determined by me—I distrust my own judgment—I can only, my dear friend, pray Heaven to direct you for the best, and to make you as happy with your amiable lover, as you deserve to be.

I am called down to company. Adieu, my excellent Harriot, and believe me ever

Yours, most affectionately,

L. M.

P. S. Mr. Selby, who still visits as a friend, is in town. Why cannot I reward his merit?

L E T.



LETTER XLI.

The Hon. Edward Astell to Lord Selwyn,
at Charles Ancombe's, Esq;

NO answer yet to my last?—What are you about? Gone back to Bath, I imagine—I only judge by myself: I know I would have pursued such a girl as Harriot, in such a tender fit, till I had moulded her to my wishes. But I need not talk neither—'tis all over with me. To prove my assertion. ———

A new first-rate beauty has exhibited herself here: lady Flora Melcombe, only daughter to the late earl of ———, and, by the recent death of her mother, left to the care of Mr. Melcombe, her uncle, who has
just

just brought her to town. You know the intimacy between *my* father and Mr. Melcombe; in consequence of which, I have been, since I wrote to you last, several times in company with lady Flora and her aunt: the latter is a fine lively agreeable woman, but Flora (had not Lucy taken entirely possession of my heart) I should have thought a charming creature indeed. She is, certainly, a very elegant nymph-like figure, about eighteen; with the most dazzling complexion, and the most seducing features to be conceived: there is also a great appearance of *naiveté* in her face, which I never met with but in Lucy Musgrove: I say, *appearance*, for I have some doubts concerning the reality of it: I strongly suspect that her *naiveté* is assumed, as she has nothing of that enchanting timidity which Lucy discovers, at present. Possibly the difference of education.—Girls are, in a great measure, as

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they

they are trained up; till love, the powerful instructor of us all, opens their eyes, and makes them see things in their natural lights, in spite of all the endeavours of mothers, aunts, and governesses, to throw false colours on the objects which attract their sight. But the divine Lucy was cast in a different mould: she has been, indeed, carefully instructed by a prudent mother, and a sensible father, from her earliest infancy; yet she is naturally more pure than any female I have hitherto met with. There is an innate modesty in her; and the strong expression of the most refined chastity in her countenance, renders her inconceivably alluring and attractive. Flora is, I believe, at this moment, as innocent, but I am firmly persuaded that I could soon make her otherwise. I see plainly that I am not an object of indifference in her eyes.

Wilt

Wilt thou never be cured of thy vanity?
say you——

Yes, faith! I am in a very fair way to be cured of it for life; for I am so humbled—so entirely let down by Lucy's perverse coldness, that I don't care a straw for the good opinion of the second finest woman upon earth. Yet you may be sure, that I shall not, in the humour I am in, miss a single opportunity to throw myself in her sight, while she continues in town. She is frequently in public; but her dear eyes, from which I derive all my joys, never once turn upon me with pleasure—upon me, whom every other woman is almost ready to devour with *bers*. Poor consolation!——

This little seducing Flora attaches herself to me with a very troublesome assiduity: yet she cannot but see, that when

Lucy is present, I have eyes for her alone. Flora affects to admire her; and tells me, that Mr. Melcombe has purchased an estate in the neighbourhood of Woodcot. She tells me also, that when they go down there, she will make a friendship with Miss Musgrove. If that could be accomplished, I might get an interview with her. It will be, therefore, worth my while, to keep up an intimacy with lady Flora—Lucy has as many admirers as there are men who look at her.



LETTER XLII.

From the same to the same.

FORTUNE has favoured me beyond my expectations. The duke of— gave a masquerade ball t'other night. Ever
vigi-

vigilant about Lucy's motions, I not only learnt that she was to be there, but by bribing a servant found out her habit. Nothing on earth could be more in character, nor more becoming to her fair face and elegant form. I wrapped my head in a white and gold turban, on which a bunch of brilliants in form of a feather playing on one side, gave me no *unpittoresque* air: but how shall I describe my lovely goddess, for a divinity she was, no less a one than the chaste Diana, attended by her train of nymphs! She was in a green satin robe, buttoned down, to shew her easy shape to more advantage with diamonds, over a white satin petticoat just short enough to discover a pair of the prettiest feet in the universe, covered also with white satin; and on her charming hair, dressed in a delicious taste, she only wore a large diamond crescent. The sleeves of her robe were short, and ruffled up almost to the top

with lace, which served to set off the finest-turned arms in the world.

I got immediately near my angel, tho' she was soon encompassed by the admiring crowd; and as I was quite unknown, made use of my disguise to ask the favour of a minuet.

Having spoken to a lady who had never left her, in the dress of a nymph, she suffered me to lead her into the circle; and performed with such a delightful diffidence, but in so graceful a manner, that I was quite lost in admiration.

I led her back again to a seat, resolving to stay by her side; when an impertinent little devil took it into her head to select me for a partner.

I was quite out of humour, and told her that I was tired.

“ It may be so,” said the saucy gypsy,
 “ when you don’t like your partner, but
 you dare not say that you cannot dance.”

Notwithstanding all her *agaceries* however, I took no pains to please her. I was impatient to be again near the lovely Lucy: I accordingly flew to her.

When the minuet was over, I had the transporting satisfaction to find her enter freely with me into conversation upon general subjects. Heavens with what taste! with what sense!

While we were talking together, a tall majestic figure in a black domino, who had eyed us for some time, joined her on the other side, to the great inconvenience of her friend on whose arm she leant, and at length grew so impertinent, that she thought proper to make an attempt to get rid of

L 4 him

him by changing her place. He offered to stop her as she strove to pass him: this occasioned a fresh insult, for he absolutely prevented her from moving by seizing both her hands. I could hold out no longer; but cried, "What means this insolence? let go the lady, or—"

"And what popinjay are you, replied the domino with insupportable contempt—who dares to interpose between me and my pleasure?"

"I shall answer that question," said I unmasking, "in a proper place: leave us, therefore, this instant."

"Not till I have corrected your pretty assurance," answered he, going to lay his hands upon me.—"

Just as the company were coming to interpose, my charming creature reclined on

the lady's shoulder who accompanied her as if she was fainting. Conceive my feelings—I forgot my situation, myself, the reasons I had for not discovering my person, in short, every thing—I attended only to the condition in which I beheld all that was dear to me.—I hurried towards her, pulled out a bottle of eau-de-luce, which immediately recovered her : but gracious ——— what a sudden coolness succeeded that cheerful civility with which she chatted to me before. She would, I believe, have frozen me with her looks—but I felt too much warmth in my heart from the force of her beauty, and from the winning graces of her carriage, to be so affected by them.—

I love her, Selwyn, ay, a thousand times more than ever, yet the passion I now feel is so totally different from that which formerly possessed me that it cannot give

L 5

offence

offence : it is now as pure as herself, as tender as she is lovely. She may be angry, she may be indifferent, but she must see by the languor in my whole person, by my trembling hands, by my inarticulate expressions, by my respect, my submission, my assiduity to remove every thing from her which may displease her, and to do every thing to procure her satisfaction, that I am not *the* Astell she once, with reason, rejected, but a new man, a man who adores her, and would sacrifice *his* life for the happiness of *hers*.

You sneer, I suppose, at this declaration ; and will tell me that I shall not long remain with these sentiments : that whether she is forgiving or not, I shall leave her for variety, for any woman however inferior to her.—

No, Harry—I would not leave her for the brightest, the most accomplished beau-

ty upon earth. I feel but too sensibly that nobody except herself can ever make me happy.—To prove my assertion—when she refused my offered hand to conduct her out, a refusal which I could not help applauding, tho' it was a dagger to my heart, for I have not, I confess, deserved the slightest favour—I could not bring myself to touch lady Flora, tho' she threw herself so fairly in my way that my negligence was downright rudeness: nay, tho' she went so far as to ask me to take care of her to her coach, I left the room, after having followed my angel to her carriage with my eyes, and in a sullen silence flung myself into my chair.—

I am restless beyond expression—every place,—every creature (but this adorable one) is odious to my sight.—Would you were in town!—for I well know—notwithstanding my past behaviour, which
has

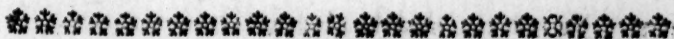
has justly provoked your reprehensions — that you would now pity me, and indulge me in the only conversation that can ever not be in the least satisfactory to

Yours, &c.

E. A.

P. S. My father, who is convinced of the sincerity of my reformation, treats me in the most affectionate manner, and joins his wishes to mine that it were possible to move this lovely but inflexible girl; sometimes wishing too that her inflexibility would make me turn my thoughts upon some other woman. He expresses the tenderest concern at the decline of my health, and the lowness of my spirits, within these few days, and has engaged lady Flora to try to amuse me. — The task imposed upon her seems to be no disagreeable one; but her endeavours will not, I may venture to say, prove efficacious. — Selby certainly

tainly succeeds better with Lucy.—What a horrid idea!



L E T T E R XLIII.

Miss Musgrove to Miss Wynne.

I HEAR nothing of you, my dear Harriot: I hope you are not ill again. Your silence made me willing to hope that you designed to surprize me in town.

I do not, by any means, approve of the life I lead at present; I am continually hurrying from one place of public diversion to another, and have scarce leisure to think at all—a life of so much dissipation is not to my taste: I should make a wretched fine Lady. My aunt Crawford is far better.

ter qualified to shine in that character : she is a sensible good-natured woman, but seems to be happy only in a crowd.

She *would* make me accompany her to the duke of ——'s ball t'other night, and as positively insisted upon appearing in the character of Diana—You cannot imagine how simple I looked; but that is nothing to the purpose. I danced, unknowingly, with the very man whom I should have avoided. I cannot approve of these disguises, they are calculated only for the carrying on bad purposes: all concealments must be wrong.

This foolish affair may be attended with disagreeable consequences. Mr. Astell thought proper to resent the impertinence of a man in a black domino, and I apprehended great danger from such a proceeding: my apprehensions, perhaps, arose from

from my ignorance of the customs at such entertainments. I was, however excessively shocked to think that I had occasioned so violent a bustle: for tho' I cannot be an advocate for Mr. Astell, I would not have him brought into dangerous circumstances on my account. I behaved with no kind of fortitude: I was, indeed, so frightened, so affected at the scene before me, that I was near fainting.—I am not ashamed of feeling for any person so situated, but I was in the utmost confusion to have my emotions exposed.——

I have other things to tell you—

My father has received proposals from a young man of fashion, Lord Grosely: but I have intreated him to dispense with my not admitting him to visit me in expectation of an event which will never happen.

happen. I desire less and less every day to change my way of life; and if I can be brought to think of a new situation, ought Selby to have the preference?

Selby was gone down to his father at the time of the ball, who being ill had sent for him: he is now returned; but do not think, my dear Harriot, that I can marry him, from what I have said—I shudder at the idea—I cannot bear to bestow a single thought on marriage—Am I not happy with my amiable relations? will they wish to remove me from them?

Mrs. Crawford, who wanted a young person to wait on her, has been recommended to one of the finest girls I ever saw. She is tall, and has a gracefulness in her air not commonly met with in people in her station, tho' she never, I believe, was in such a station before, the misfortunes of
her.

her family having obliged her to have recourse to a dependent way of life; a way of life for which she seems, from her person and manners, very unfit: she acquits herself, indeed, very much to my aunt's satisfaction, but there is a melancholy in her countenance that shews she is far from being contented—This melancholy, I am informed, is never so strong, nor so visible as when I am present—she frequently looks at me, 'tis true, in a very particular manner, and then turns away her head, striving to suppress a sigh, while tears force themselves into her eyes: is not this behaviour rather extraordinary? But perhaps, she cannot get over the trouble which she feels for the troubles of her family, and I think it may be, that as I am the nearest of her own age, I may be the more sensible of her sorrow.

I have spoken to her with great good-nature more than once about common things,

and could I decently introduce a conversation that might lead to a discovery of her affliction, I would do all in my power to relieve her—but unless she is as ready to speak as I am to hear, it won't do—for nothing is more cruel in my opinion, than the revival of the misfortunes of those whom we wish to relieve by an ill placed pity. I will not seem to see that she is unhappy, till I think, she desires me to take notice of her unhappiness.

As we all lodge in the same house, she, being more used to these things than my own Kitty, dressed me for the ball, and, after our coming home, when she heard of the *fracas* that had happened, discovered so much emotion that I was really surprized. She trembled to such a degree that she could hardly assist me to take off my habit.

Imagin-

Imagining that she was ill I reached a chair, and ran for some drops for her; but she refused them, saying she should soon recover, and was quite ashamed of herself for having given me so much trouble.—A sigh and some tears followed those few words.

I strove to comfort her, and she appeared pleased with my endeavours. She then ventured to ask me two or three questions about the ball and the company, yet very modestly. My replies seemed to affect her a good deal, especially when I mentioned how much I was alarmed lest any mischief should arise.

When she left me to retire to rest, she looked at me earnestly, and sighed deeply; and when I said, with all the complacency I was mistress of, “Good night, Maria, I hope we shall be more chearful to-morrow,”

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row," a second sigh burst from her, and
she quitted the room very abruptly. I
don't know what to make of this new affair
—can your penetration make any disco-
veries?—But you have forgot your Lucy.
—Write soon, or I shall have a thousand
disagreeable apprehensions.

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